BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.

DARBHANGA.

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BY

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PREFACE.

WHEN the Statistical Account of Bengal by Sir W. W. Hunter was published, the district of Darbhangā had only recently been constituted, and it was treated as part of the old district of Tirhut, in which it was comprised until 1875. The present volume is, therefore, the first Gazetteer in which Darbhangā has been treated as a separate district.

I desire to acknowledge the very great assistance I have derived in compiling this volume from the Darbhangā Survey and Settlement Report (1904) by Mr. J. H. Kerr, I.C.S.

L. S. S. O'M.

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GAZETTEER

OF THE

DARBHANGA DISTRICT.

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS

General description.

The district of Darbhanga, which forms the north-eastern portion of the Patna Division, lies between 25° 28′ and 26° 40′ north latitude and between 85° 31′ and 86° 44′ east longitude. It contains a total area of 3,348 square miles; and it is thus very much larger than any county in England or Ireland, except Yorkshire. Its shape is that of a fairly well-defined parallelogram, its mean length being greater than its mean breadth; its greatest length from north-east to south-west is 96 miles. The principal civil station, which is also the most populous town in the district, is Darbhangā, situated in 26° 10′ N. and 85° 54′ E.

Boundaries.

The district is bounded on the north by Nepāl, on the east by the district of Bhāgalpur, on the west by Muzaffarpur, on the south-east by the district of Monghyr, and on the south-west by the Ganges, which divides it from the Patna district.

Origin of name.

It takes its name from its chief town; and local patriotism insists that Darbhangā is derived from *Dwārā Banga* or *Dar-i-Bangal*, meaning the door of Bengal. This derivation appears, however, to be philologically impossible and also historically incorrect, as the division between Bengal and Bihār has always been much further to the east. It seems more probable that the name is derived from that of the traditional founder of the town, one Darbhangī Khān, a Muhammadan freebooter, of whom little or nothing is known. The district formerly constituted part of Tirhut, a huge unwieldy district extending over 6,343 square miles; but this vast extent of territory being beyond the administrative capacity of a single Collector, it was divided into two in 1875, the western portion being constituted the district of Muzaffarpur, and the eastern and larger portion being formed

into a separate district, called Darbhangā after the name of its head-quarters. The name Tirhut is still, however, used as a convenient appellation for the country included in these two districts.

General configuration.

Darbhangā is a great alluvial plain with a general slope from north to south varied by a depression in the centre, corresponding roughly with the Warisnagar thāna. The country lies on a low level, in many places indented with chains of shallow marshes, marking the lines of drainage by which the local rainfall and the overflow of the hill streams which intersect the district find their way southwards into the Ganges. The rivers flow on raised beds, which they have gradually constructed for themselves out of the silt brought down from the mountains in Nepal. The alluvial plain, diversified only by these river ridges, is rich in all sorts of crops. In some tracts nothing but an enormous stretch of rice fields meets the eye, but in others the level plain is dotted with numerous clusters of bamboos and groves of mango and *sisu* trees.

Natural divisions.

Darbhangā is divided by its interior river system into three well-defined physical divisions. The first of these, starting from the south, is the tract in the extreme south-west of the district comprising the thānas of Dalsingh Sarai and Samastipur which are separated from the rest of the district by the Little or Burh Gandak river. This area consists of a large block of upland with a few *chaurs* or marshes here and there, and is the richest and most fertile portion of the district. The second main physical division corresponds roughly with the Warisnagar thāna and consists of a small marshy *doāb* between the Bāghmati and Burh Gandak rivers. This tract is the lowest part of the district, and is liable to inundation from the former river. The rest of the district comprising the head-quarters and Madhubanī subdivisions, consists of a vast low-lying plain intersected by numerous streams and marshes, but traversed also in parts by upland ridges. The south-eastern portion, corresponding roughly with the thānas of Baherā and Rusera, is, in the rainy season, mainly a vast chain of temporary lakes, joined together by the numerous beds of the hill streams which pass through the Madhubanī subdivision on their way from Nepāl to the Ganges. Large tracts in this area do not dry up till well on in the cold weather, and in some places communications are open for only three or four months of the year. In the Madhubanī subdivision, the land is generally higher, especially in the three western thānas and in the south of Phulparās, which contain stretches of high land.

River system.

The district thus contains three main river systems, the Ganges, the Little Gandak, and the Kamlā-Tiljūgā group of rivers. The Ganges forms part of the southern boundary of Darbhanga

and further north the Little Gandak separates the greater portion of the Samástipur subdivision from the rest of the district. That subdivision itself contains no rivers of any importance, but to the north there is a network of rivers and streams, called the Kamlá-Tiljúgá group, most of which converge on the extreme south-east corner of the district. In the Madhubaní and head-quarters subdivisions, practically all the rivers are liable to overflow their banks during heavy floods, but they rapidly drain off into the low-lying country in the south-east of the district, on which all the lines of drainage north of the Little Gandak converge. Their most marked characteristic in this portion of their course is that they flow on ridges elevated above the surrounding country, and each pair of rivers thus encloses a shallow depression, consisting of a series of *chaurs* or low lands leading into one another and forming the drainage channels of the country.

The Ganges. The Ganges skirts the district for 20 miles, but there are no large marts on its bank in this portion of its course. It is nowhere fordable at any time of the year, and its channel, when clear of sand-banks, is generally about a mile wide. In the rains, however, its breadth is much greater, large expanses of sand, which fringe its banks at other seasons, being then covered with water. These sand-banks are constantly changing, forming and re-forming in the most capricious way. Generally speaking, the bank on the Darbhangá side is sloping and ill-defined; and the low-lying lands in the neighbourhood are annually flooded.

The Bayá. The only stream of any importance which joins the Ganges direct, and not by way of the other river systems, is the Bayá. This river is an overflow of the Great Gandak, which forms the boundary between Muzaffarpur and Sáran. After flowing through the south of Muzaffarpur, it runs through part of the Dalsingh Sarai thána in this district, and finally joins the Ganges just below Dhanespur at the extreme south-east corner of the Samástipur subdivision.

The Little Gandak. The Little Gandak, or the Burh Gandak, as it is also called, is an important river throughout its course in Champáran, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and North Monghyr. In all these districts it marks a clearly defined division of the country. It enters the Darbhangá district near Púsa, and after flowing past Samástipur, leaves it just below Rusera. Though its importance has been diminished by the railway, it is still a valuable trade highway, and there are many large bazars and marts on its banks. It is navigable, practically all the year round, for country boats of fair size. Its offshoots, the Jamwári and the Balán, leave it near Púsa and, after flowing through the south-west of the

Samastipur subdivision, rejoin the parent stream in Monghyr, before it flows into the Ganges at Khagaria.

The Kamla-Tiljūgā rivers.

All the rivers in the head-quarters and Madhubani subdivisions belong to the Kamlā-Tiljūgā group, so called because they converge at Tilakeswar in the south-east corner of Rusera thāna, and are thenceforward known indiscriminately by either name, while proceeding through Monghyr and Bhāgalpur to join the Ganges and the Kosi by various tortuous courses. The first of the group, the Bāghmati, rises in Nepāl, and during its course through Darbhangā pursues an easterly direction parallel to the Burh Gandak; it formerly joined this river near Rusera, but within the past 30 years it has cut out a new bed for itself, and now flows into the Karai and joins the Tiljūgā at Tilakeswar. The Karai, prior to its junction with the Bāghmati, is an unimportant stream. The Little Bāghmati, on which the town of Darbhangā stands, also finds its way to the Tiljūga by the bed of the Karai. Its chief tributary is the Dhaus, which runs through the north-west of Benipati thāna. The Little Bāghmati was formerly joined near Kamtaul by the Kamlā, a river whose old beds are found all over the north of the Madhubani subdivision. It used to flow 10 miles east of Madhubani town, but now passes 10 miles to the west of it, its main channel running about 4 miles east of Darbhangā town past Baherā, Singia and Hirni to Tilakeswar. It is a fairly large river in the rains and is liable to heavy floods. Still further east is the Little Balan, a deep and narrow river with a well-defined bed, which runs south through the eastern part of Khajauli and Madhubani thānas, and joins the Tiljūgā near Rusera. The Balān proper, also known as the Bhāti Balān, is a river with a wide shifting sandy bed, also liable to heavy floods, but practically dry during a great part of the year. Its old beds are found all over the north of Phulparās thāna. Last comes the Tiljūgā, which rises in Nepāl and skirts the entire eastern boundary of the district, though parts of it lie in the Bhāgalpur district.

In Darbhangā and Muzaffarpur the Kamlā is worshipped as the younger sister of the Ganges, and receives similar offerings of goats, which are thrown alive into the river and are then taken by Mallāhs. Women pray to this river goddess for issue; children are taken to the river bank when their heads are first shaved; and she is worshipped when new tanks or wells are excavated.

Geology.

Darbhangā is a level plain rising very gradually towards the foot of the Himālayas, and with a belt of fairly high land along the bank of the Ganges. Between these two extremes the general elevation is lower, and considerable areas are liable to inundation. The soil consists mainly of the older alluvium or *bāngar*, a

yellowish clay with frequent deposits of *kankar*, but in parts this has been cut away by the rivers rushing down from the Himálayas, and the low land, through which the latter find an exit to the Ganges, is composed of more recent deposits of sand and silt brought down by them when in flood. The soil of the district is thus entirely alluvial. It is impregnated in parts with saltpetre and other salts; and occasionally beds of *kankar*, or nodular limestone of an inferior quality, are met with.

BOTANY. "The essential features," writes Major D. Prain, I.M.S., in Bengal Plants, "of the vegetation in the area to the north of the Ganges, from the Gandak on the west to the Brahmaputra on the east, as we pass from north to south, are as follows. First, a narrow, more or less sloping, gravelly submontane tract along the base of the Himalaya, covered, except along river-beds, with a dense forest, the constituent species of which are those that occur on the lower slopes of the mountains themselves. In existing river beds only a few tough flexible bushes occur; along abandoned shingly river-courses the jungle is open and park-like, and the species are those characteristic of a drier climate than obtains in the forest alongside. This submontane forest is normally succeeded by a belt of swampy land of varying width, covered with long reedy grasses. Further out into the plain the ground as a rule rises somewhat, and, if so high as to be free from inundations, is in waste tracts usually covered with open jungle of a bushy character in the western parts, taller and more park-like in the central districts, and mixed with reedy grass or sometimes consisting only of tall grass as we pass to the east. Much of this tract, however, especially in the west, is under cultivation, and is then bare or diversified with bamboos, palms, and orchards of mangoes, or, less often, groves of other trees; in and about the villages themselves the mangoes are often accompanied by a number of tree-weeds and semi-spontaneous, more or less useful, bushes and trees."

For botanical purposes Darbhangá forms part of Tirhut, *i.e.*, the region lying from west to east between the Gandak and Kosi, and from north to south between the sub-Himálayan forest and the Ganges. The botanical features of this tract are in many ways different from those of Bihár, *i.e.*, the tract extending from the Son on the west to the old bed of the Bhágirathi on the east, and lying from north to south between the Ganges and the *ghát*s of Chotá Nágpur. Together they form an integral portion of the Upper Gangetic plain, but, as Major Prain points out, "Tirhut is wholly flat, whereas Bihár is much diversified by hills Bihár, too, is appreciably drier than Tirhut, and these two

circumstances, greater diversity of surface and less humidity, account for the presence in Bihár of many species that are absent from Tirhut. Another and, though an accidental, not less important factor in influencing the vegetation of Tirhut is the density of the population. So close, in consequence, is the tilth, that throughout whole districts field is conterminous with field, and the cultivated land abuts so closely on wayside and watercourse as to leave no foothold for those species that form the roadside hedges and fill the weedy waste places so characteristic of Lower Bengal. Even the village shrubberies that constitute so marked a feature of much of our area, are in Tirhut conspicuous by their absence. The result is that, except for the water-plants in the smaller streams and sluggish rivers, the vegetation of Tirhut is chiefly limited to the crops with their concomitant field-weeds; even the latter are often conspicuous by their paucity."

The following is an account of the different botanical species found in Darbhangá:—

The ground is under close cultivation, and besides the crops carries only a few field-weeds, except for a few very small patches of jungle, whereof the chief constituents are the red cotton tree (*Bombax malabaricum*), *khair* (*Acacia Catechu*) and *sisu* (*Dalbergia Sissoo*); in these parts there is an under-growth of euphorbiaceous and urticaceous shrubs and tree-weeds, like *Breynia*, *Trema*, *Flueggia*, *Phyllanthus* and *Glochidion*. Occasionally also large stretches of grass land are found, of which the chief species are *Eragrostis cynosuroides*, *Andropogon intermedium*, *Imperata arundinacea*, *Saccharum spontaneum*. These are interspersed with smaller spots of *úsar* land sparingly beset with *Andropogon aciculatus*, *Diplachne*, *Sporobolus* and similar grasses. Near villages small shrubberies may be found containing mango, *sisu*, *Eugenia Jambolana*, various species of *Ficus*, an occasional tamarind and a few other semi-spontaneous and more or less useful species. Both the palmyra (*Borassus flabellifer*) and the *khajúr* (*Phœnix sylvestris*) occur planted and at times self-sown, but neither in great abundance. By the roadsides or round village enclosures, hedges of *Jatropha Curcas*, *Cæsalpinia sepiaria*, *Grewia* and similar shrubs are often covered with climbing species of *Convolvulacea*, *Tragia involucrata* and various species of *Vitis*. Hedge-row weeds are represented by *Jatropha gossypifolia*, *Martynia diandra* and similar plants. The field and roadside weeds include various grasses and sedges, chiefly species of *Panicum* and *Cyperus*; prostrate species of *Evolvulus*, *Indigofera*, *Ionidium*, *Desmodium*; and herbaceous species of *Phyllanthus*, *Euphorbia*, *Heliotropium*, and the like. In waste corners and on railway

embankments thickets of *sisu*, derived both from seeds and root-suckers, very readily appear. The sluggish streams and ponds are filled with water weeds, submerged *Ceratophyllum*, *Hydrilla*, *Vallisneria*, *Ottelia*, and floating *Potamogeton*, *Nelumbium*, *Nymphæa*, *Trapa*, *Jussiæa*, *Ipomœa*, the sides being often fringed by reedy grasses and bulrushes occasionally intermixed with tamarisk bushes.

Tirhut was formerly famous for the variety of its fauna in the days when forests covered large stretches of land which are now under the plough "The buffaloes," says the author of the Ain-i-Akbarī, "are so savage that they will attack a tiger. There are many lakes, and in one of them the water never decreases, and the depth is unfathomable. Groves of mango trees extend to a distance of 20 *kos*, delighting the eye In the rainy season gazelle, deer and tiger frequent the cultivated spots and are hunted by the inhabitants. The deer they surround with an enclosure, and take them when they please." Even towards the close of the 18th century wild animals were still very plentiful. A few years before the Permanent Settlement rewards were paid for the slaughter of 51 tigers in a single year; there was much waste land in the north of the district inhabited by the beasts of prey that cultivation had driven out of the more southern tracts; and the depredations of herds of wild elephants were a serious danger. FAUNA.

The advance of cultivation, the growth of the population, and the extension of means of communication have now driven the wild animals which formerly infested the district back to the jungles of Nepāl; and there is no jungle left sufficiently large and dense to provide shelter for the larger beasts of prey. Leopards are occasionally found in patches of jungle towards the north, but only for a few months at a time, and they are merely stray visitors from Nepāl. Wolves and hyænas are met with but rarely. Jackals are numerous; they often carry off goats and kids, and sometimes children. The fox, wild cat, martin and civet are the other small predatory animals common in the district. The mongoose, hare and porcupine are plentiful towards the south. The only representatives of the Ungulata are *nilgai* (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) and wild pig. The former are not common, but are sometimes found in considerable numbers in large patches of thatching grass. Lately, however, there has been an influx of *nilgai* causing considerable damage to the standing crops. The wild pig has also become scarcer, as the waste lands and patches of jungle and grass which were formerly common have been brought more and more under cultivation. He does little damage, except in the immediate neighbourhood of a few large grasses, where he now makes his home. Whenever he can be found, he is still

hunted with the same keenness by the Europeans of the district; and though his kind has decreased in number, he retains the same qualities of cunning, hardihood and courage which make pig-sticking one of the finest sports in the world.

Game birds.

The game birds of the district are not numerous. They consist of quail of various kinds in small numbers, a few snipe, grey partridge, and a few black partridge in patches of thatching grass. Duck of all kinds come in at the beginning of cold weather. They are found in the early part of the season in the big *chaurs*, where rice is growing, before the water has dried up. They go later to the numerous tanks which are found all over the country. The following kinds of duck and teal are known:—the red-headed, white-eyed and crested pochard, pin-tail and shoveller duck, widgeon, ruddy sheldrake, blue-winged, whistling and cotton teal. The spotted bill duck, whistler and cotton teal breed here. Snipe, plover, cranes, storks, curlew and numerous sorts of waders are regular visitors.

Fish.

Most of the rivers and lakes, and many of the tanks abound in small fish, such as *rahu*, *nuni*, *jasu*, *bachua*, *tengra*, *singhi*, *katla*, mullet, a great variety of the smaller carp, poach and dace-like fish, a predatory fish known as *bodri*, and a flatsided fish called *bansa*, some of which grow to a large size. The *hilsa* has sometimes been found in the Little Gandak. In the latter river and in the Baghmati and other larger rivers, the Gangetic porpoise is fairly common. The common turtle is also found in the larger rivers and lakes. The *gharial* or fish-eating crocodile and the mugger or snub-nosed variety, locally called *kach*, are found in most of the rivers. The former are occasionally of great size, *gharials* 20 feet and more in length having been shot.*

Climate.

The climate of Darbhangá is generally dry, bracing and healthy. The range of the thermometer is not so great as in the south of the Patna Division; and though the heat is greater than in the deltaic districts of Bengal proper, the dryness of the atmosphere renders its effects less enervating. The year is divided into three well-defined periods—the cold weather, the hot weather, and the rainy season. The first commences early in November, and may be said to last till nearly the end of March; for though the days then begin to be hot, the nights and early mornings continue comparatively cool and fresh. It would be difficult to find a more delightful climate than that which Darbhangá enjoys at this time of the year. The days are bright, warm and invigorating; and as soon as the sun sets, the temperature falls, and a

* I am indebted to Mr. W. Egerton, I. C. S., Collector of Darbhangá, for this account of the Fauna of the district.

fire is at once a comfort and a necessity. The hot season, commencing early in April, is ushered in by dust-storms and west winds, which often cause the temperature to rise above 96° in the shade. The heat is most intense in May, and unless broken by frequent rain, continues to increase until the gathering clouds herald the approach of the rainy season In an exceptional year the wind may blow steadily from the east, but such seasons, though cool, are not healthy The west winds, on the other hand, though they parch up vegetation and raise immense clouds of dust, are generally healthy, and even pleasant, for when they blow, the interior of the houses can be kept cool by means of screens of moistened scented grass (*khas-khas tattis*); these are placed at the windows, and kept constantly wet, so that the hot wind blows into the house cooled and tempered About the middle of June is the usual date for the commencement of the rains. Sometimes a few days' downpour is succeeded by a week or ten days of fair weather before the rains really break. The rainy season continues till the end of September or the middle of October, when the saturated ground begins to dry. This is considered to be the most trying season of the year; the air is hot and steamy, while the sun's rays are still powerful. The temperature then gradually diminishes, and by November the mornings become perceptibly cool.

Temperature and humidity.

In spite of the dry westerly winds experienced in the hot season, the temperature is not so excessive as in South Bihar, the highest on record at Darbhanga being 107° in 1894. The mean maximum temperature ranges from 75° in January to 96 in April and May, and falls to 75 in December, more than half the change taking place in November and December. The mean minimum temperature varies from 52 in January to 80 in July, the lowest ever recorded being 38 in January 1878

Humidity is, on an average, just over 60 per cent. of saturation in March and April, 70 in May, and generally between 80 and 90 in other months, the highest being 88 in July and August.

Rainfall.

During the months November to April fine dry weather, with an almost entire absence of cloud and rainfall, prevails, and only a fraction of an inch falls monthly. In normal years the monsoon breaks in June, when there are 7·4 inches of rain; the heaviest rainfall occurs in July and August, varying from 12·5 inches in the former to 12·9 inches in the latter month; and the rainfall then decreases to 9·9 inches in September. At this period rainfall is heavy in the submontane tract, partly owing to the heavy showers which occur when cyclonic storms break up on

reaching the hills, and partly because the monsoon current is stronger towards the west along the foot of the hills.

Statistics of the rainfall at the various recording stations are given below for the cold weather (November to February), the hot weather (March to May), and the rainy season (June to October). The figures shown are the averages recorded from the earliest year in which rainfall was systematically registered up to the end of 1906.

Stations	Years recorded	November to February.	March to May	June to October.	Annual average.
Darbhanga	30–31	1·25	3·65	44·16	49·09
Hanpha ...	15–16	1·89	4·22	48·56	54·17
Kusha	15–16	1·28	3·11	44·58	48·97
Madhubani	28–30	1·36	4·21	44·53	50·10
Samastipur	30–31	1·41	2·93	42·17	46·51

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY

DARBHANGA, lying on one of the great lines of Aryan immigration, was occupied at an early period by races of Aryan descent; and according to the legend preserved in Vedic literature, it formed part of the country in which the Videhas settled on their migration from the Punjab. The legend relates that Agni, the god of fire, accompanied the Videhas on their march eastwards from the banks of the Saraswatī, and when they came to the broad stream of the Gandak, informed them that their home lay to the east of the river. Thenceforward, the Videhas lived to the east of the Gandak, where they cleared the marshes, cultivated the virgin soil, and founded a great and powerful kingdom. This kingdom was in course of time ruled over by king Janaka, round whose name a halo of legend clings. Under his rule, according to Hindu mythology, the kingdom of Mithilā was the most civilized kingdom in India. His court was a centre of learning and attracted all the most learned men of the time. Vedic literature was enriched by the studies of the scholars who flocked there; his chief priest, Yājnavalkya, inaugurated the stupendous task of revising the Yajur Vedas; and the speculations of the monarch himself, enshrined in the sacred works called the Upanishads, are still cherished with veneration by the Hindu community. The centre of this enlightened kingdom of Videha was apparently in Tirhut; the capital was Mithila, which is probably identifiable with that of Janakpur, a town a short distance to the north-west of the district in Nepāl territory, the name of which preserves the memory of the scholar-king who made it his capital; and tradition points to the village of Phulhar in the north-east corner of the Benipatī thāna, as the flower-garden where the king's priests used to gather flowers for the worship of the gods, and identifies its temple with that of the Devī Girijā worshipped by Sītā before her marriage with Rāma. The legends inspired by local patriotism make this tract of country the home of several *rishis*. At the junction of the rivers Jamunā and Kamlā there dwelt the great sage, Jai Muni Rishi, who compiled a learned treatise on the laws of justice in relation to the worship of the gods; the village

PRE-HISTORIC PERIOD.

of Kakraul at the eastern junction of the Kamlā and Karai was the abode of the sage Kapildeva Muni, the celebrated author of the collection of Vedic hymns called the Sānkhya Yoga; while in the north-west corner of the Darbhangā thāna there stands to this day the Brahmanical village of Ahiāri, where lived the third member of the famous trio of Tirhut sages, Gautama Rishi, the author of the Nyāya Sāstra and the husband of Ahalyā, from whom the village is said to have derived its name. Similarly, the neighbouring village of Bisaul is believed to mark the site of the hermitage of the sage Viswatra, and at Jagban, near the Kamtaul railway station, a banyan tree extending over a large area is adored as the hermitage of Yājnavalkya.

EARLY HISTORIC PERIOD.

The earliest event, however, which can claim historic reality is the rise of the Vrijjian oligarchical republic, which apparently replaced the old monarchical rule of Videha, while the centre of power shifted from Mithilā to Vaisāli, the modern Basārh in the adjoining district of Muzaffarpur. The Vrijjians included eight confederate clans, of whom the Lichchhavis were the most important. The growing power of the latter brought them into collision with the kingdom of Magadha, the limits of which roughly corresponded at this time with the modern districts of Patna and Gayā. Bimbisāra (*cir.* 519 B. C.), the founder of the Magadhan imperial power, had strengthened his position by matrimonial alliances with the more powerful of the neighbouring States, taking one consort from the royal family of Kosala, a kingdom to the west of Tirhut, and another from the influential Lichchhavi clan at Vaisāli. His murder by his son Ajātasatru involved the parricide in war with the aged king of Kosala, whose sister, the queen of the murdered Bimbisāra, is said to have died of grief. This war ending with the complete victory of Ajātasatru, his ambition next induced him to undertake the conquest of the country now known as Tirhut, in which the Lichchhavi clan occupied a prominent position (*cir.* 490 B.C.). The invasion was successful; the Lichchhavi capital, Vaisāli, was occupied; and Ajātasatru became master of Tirhut. It is probable* that the invader carried his victorious arms to their natural limit, the foot of the mountains, and that from this time the whole country between the Ganges and the Himālayas became subject, more or less directly, to the suzerainty of Magadha. From this time too dates the foundation of Pātaliputra (Patna), as the victor erected a fortress at the village of Pātali on the Ganges to curb his Lichchhavi opponents, and the foundations of a city nestling under the shelter of the fortress were laid by his grandson Udaya (*cir.* 434 B.C.).

* Early History of India by V. A. Smith.

Darbhangā must have shared in the religious ferment which so deeply stirred the hearts of the dwellers in the Gangetic valley in the sixth century B.C. North of the Ganges this movement seems to have centred at Vaisāli, which was thrice visited by Buddha, and was also the home of Mahāvīra Vardhamāna, the founder or rather developer of Jainism. The scene of Mahāvīra's ministry was laid in North and South Bihār; and here in a long wandering life of 42 years, he succeeded in gathering a considerable following of monks, known as the Nigranthas or men who discarded all social ties, who after Mahāvīra's death (*cir.* 490 B.C.) spread over the whole of India and became known as the Jains. About the same time, Buddha was engaged in his ministry in the same tract of country, and it seems beyond doubt that when he was spreading his doctrines at the neighbouring city of Vaisāli, the people of Darbhangā must have been among those who welcomed his teaching. It is at least clear from the account of the second great Buddhist Council that by the fourth century B.C. Tirhut had become a centre of Buddhism. This Council, it is said, was rendered necessary by the laxity of the Vrijjian monks, who asserted the legality of certain relaxations of the rule of discipline. The result was that the Buddhist community became split up into two contending parties, the strict and the lax, and the convocation of a Council was necessary for the restoration of order. The Council was held at Vaisāli, but the local monks failed to convince the assembled brotherhood of the validity of their claims, and all the relaxations were finally prohibited. The fact, however, that the Council was held at Vaisāli, and that the contentions of the local monks could cause such a schism in the Buddhist Church, sufficiently shows what a stronghold of Buddhism Tirhut was at this time. Buddhism and Jainism.

For several centuries after this we have no record of the history of Tīrhut. It continued to form part of the territory of the Vrijjians and Lichchhavis, who acknowledged the suzerainty of the Maurya kings; but while the western portion, lying on the royal road from Pātaliputra to Nepāl, was enriched by the imperial monuments of Asoka, the eastern portion possesses no such remains. The capital, Vaisāli, seems to have been overshadowed by Pātaliputra, the seat of the Maurya kings; and during the reign of the Imperial Guptas, it probably formed the head-quarters of Tīrabhukti (Tirhut), one of the districts of their empire. Recent excavations* at Basārh have, however, disclosed remains which throw some light on its history during the fourth and fifth century A.D. Seals of officials have been found, which very probably were attached to letters addressed by imperial Vaisāli.

* Report Arch. Surv. Ind., 1903-04.

officers to the governors or chiefs of that district residing at Vaisâli, among whom are certain officers who are distinctly defined as being in charge of Tirabhukti; and the great number of other seals, attached to letters sent by merchants and bankers, point to the large commercial transactions that were conducted in those days between the chiefs and important traders from Patna and other cities. Indeed, the presence of seals of mercantile and banking guilds lends some plausibility to the suggestion that something like a Chamber of Commerce had been established even at that early date in Upper India; while the titles of the chiefs or governors, such as the commander of the military forces, the head of the police, the chief chamberlain, the chief of the war-office treasury, the governor of the city and the chief of the Prince's ministers show a well-organized and advanced form of government.

Chinese pilgrims.

It is not until the seventh century A.D. that we find a detailed account of the country in the records of Hiuen Tsiang's travels, from which it would appear that Tirhut comprised the territory of Vaisâli to the south and the Vrijjian kingdom to the north. Hiuen Tsiang, who visited the country about 635 A.D., describes the kingdom of Vaisâli as about 1,000 miles (5,000 *li*) in circuit. The soil was rich and fertile, and flowers and fruit were produced in abundance, the mango and plantain being especially plentiful. The climate was agreeable and temperate, the manners of the people were pure and honest, and they loved religion and highly esteemed learning. To the north-east of Vaisâli was the Vrijjian kingdom, some 800 miles (4,000 *li*) in circuit, stretching away from east to west in a long narrow strip. The capital Chansuna (Janakpur?) was in ruins, and the inhabitants, who were of a quick and hasty temper, were mostly heretics who did not follow the law of Buddha. Hiuen Tsiang's account of Vaisâli shows that even there Buddhism was on the decline. Heretics and believers were living together, and he found the remains of hundreds of Buddhist monasteries; but only three or four were inhabited, and those sheltered but a few monks. The Jains were numerous, as might be expected in the birth-place of their religion; and Brahmanical Hindus worshipped at more than a score of shrines.* There is, however, proof that Buddhists

* In describing the seals of the fourth and fifth centuries, recently found at Basârh, Dr. Bloch remarks—"Turning to the emblems on the seals, the first thing that strikes one is the total absence of any symbol of Buddhism. * * The evidence of the emblems on the seals, so far as they have any connection with religious worship, together with the names occurring in the inscriptions and the seals bearing benedictory formulas, rather led me to conclude that most of the persons to whom the seals belonged were followers of the Brahminical creed or Jainas, or both." Report Arch. Surv. Ind., 1903-04.

remained there, probably until the conquest of the country by the Muhammadans, in the Buddhist images recently found among its ruins, which belong to the end of Buddhist history in India.

MEDIÆVAL PERIOD.

From the time of Hiuen Tsiang there is practically no historical information regarding North Bihār until the ascendancy of the Pāla dynasty (800—1200 A.D.). At the time of Hiuen Tsiang's visit it must have formed part of the dominions of Harsha, the powerful ruler of Northern India between 606 and 648 A.D., who exercised a certain amount of control as suzerain over the whole of Bengal as far east as Assam and possessed full sovereign power over Western and Central Bengal. But after his death the local chieftains no doubt asserted their independence, and Tirhut passed under the rule of petty potentates. Early in the ninth century Gopāla, the founder of the Pāla dynasty, became ruler of Bengal, and towards the close of his life (*cir.* 850 A.D.) he extended his power westward over Bihār. In the 11th century the country was wrested from the Pālas by the ambitious kings of Chedi, a tract corresponding to the present Central Provinces; and in 1019 A. D., it acknowledged the sovereignty of Gangeyadeva, who aimed at attaining paramount power in Northern India. The end of that century witnessed the rise of the power of the Sena Kings, who not only wrested their eastern provinces from the Pālas, but also appear to have carried their arms northwards to North Bihār. Mithilā formed the north-western province under the Sena rule, which in this part of Bihār is still commemorated by the use of the Lakshmana Sena era, the first current year (1119-20 A.D.) of which was apparently the date of either the accession or the coronation of Lakshmana Sena, the last great king of the Sena dynasty.

MUHAMMADAN PERIOD.

In the beginning of the 13th century the tide of Muhammadan conquest swept over Bihār, but it does not appear to have reached far north of the Ganges; for it is not till the time of Ghiās-ud-dīn Iwaz, the Muhammadan Governor of Bengal between 1211 and 1226, that we learn that the banner of Islām was triumphantly carried into the territories of the Rājā of Tirhut, which had never before been subdued, and the Rājā compelled to pay tribute. This appears, however, to have been rather a successful invasion than an effectual conquest of the whole country, as a local dynasty of Hindu kings was established about this time at Simrāon in the north-east corner of the Champāran district, and these kings succeeded in maintaining their rule over Tirhut for over a century, until the invasion of Tughlak Shāh in 1323 finally put an end to their independence.

The Simrāon dynasty.

Of the earlier kings of this dynasty we have only traditional accounts. Its founder was one Nāna or Nānyupa Deva, who is said

to have established himself at Simrāon, and to have eventually subdued the whole of Mithilā and to have overcome the king of Nepāl. Tradition relates that one of his sons reigned in Nepāl, and the other, Gangā Deva, in Mithilā. Here he is credited with having introduced the system of fiscal divisions or *parganas* for the purposes of revenue administration; while a *chaudhri* or headman was appointed in each *pargana* to collect the revenue, and a *panchāyat* was chosen to settle all disputes. Local legend states that this king had a citadel at Laherā Rājā, a village in the Baherā thāna, and that the two large tanks of Gangā Sāgar near the Darbhangā railway station, and another at Andhrā Thārhi in the north-east of Madhubanī, were excavated during his reign. At the latter place he is said to have built a fort, and the villagers of Bairiyā, some 2 miles to the east, claim to be the descendants of his Prime Minister, Srīdhar Kāyasth. Gangā Deva was succeeded by his son Narsingh Deva, who is said to have had a quarrel with his kinsman, the king of Nepāl, the upshot of which was that Mithilā and Nepāl were separated never to be united again. Rām Singh Deva, who succeeded his father on the throne, was a pious devotee and a firm patron of sacred literature. Under his auspices, several well-known commentaries on the Vedas were compiled; rules were framed for the guidance of Hindus in their religious and social observances; and an officer was appointed in each village to adjudicate upon all questions arising from the working of these new canons of conduct. Various reforms in the system of internal administration are also attributed to this king. In every village a police officer was appointed whose duty it was to make a daily report of all occurrences worthy of note to the *chaudhri* or head revenue-collector of the *pargana*; the latter being assigned, in return for his services, a certain quantity of land, the produce of which was appropriated by him and his heirs in office. To the same period too is assigned the rise of the system of *patwāris* or village accountants, who were, it is said, paid at the rate of Rs. 10 a month from the village funds.

On the death of Rām Singh Deva, his son, Sakti Singh, ascended the throne, but his despotism appears to have offended the nobles, and one of his ministers established a council of seven elders as a check upon the autocratic power of the king. His son Hara Singh Deva, the last of the line, is said to have excavated the Harahi and other tanks in this district, and to have prepared records of the caste subdivisions of the Brāhmans and Karna Kāyasths within his dominions. Fortunately, with this king we are on more certain ground than that of tradition. In 1323 the Emperor Tughlak Shāh led his victorious forces into Tirhut on

his march back from the defeat of Bahādur Shāh, the rebellious Governor of Bengal. The fort of Hara Singh was taken, and the king himself fled northwards, and in his turn conquered the valley of Nepāl, though he does not seem to have maintained any effectual authority over it. As Professor Bendall* says:— "Until more evidence is forthcoming, it seems safer to regard Hara Singh and his ancestors who reigned in Tirhut, Simrāon and also possibly other parts of the Nepāl *Tarai* as at most titular kings of Nepāl, even if they really claimed sovereignty over the valley of Nepāl at all."

Thākur dynasty.

With the flight of Hara Singh, Tirhut became a dependency of the Empire of Delhi, and Tughlak Shāh placed it under Kāmeswara Thākur, the founder of the Thākur dynasty, which continued to rule over Tirhut till early in the 16th century. Here, as elsewhere, the Muhammadan conquest passed over the land without sweeping away all the ancient land marks. In some places the Muhammadans allowed the Hindu chiefs to remain undisturbed in their possessions, and in others they appointed new men as ruling chiefs; but in either case they did not interfere with the internal administration so long as their tribute was paid. The Hindu rulers of Tirhut were therefore practically independent, so long as they acknowledged their submission to the Muhammadans by the payment of an annual tribute. Their tenure of power, however, depended solely on the pleasure of their Muhammadan over-lords. The first of the line, Kāmeswara, was deposed by Firoz Shāh (1353), who gave the throne to his younger son Bhogiswara, who was his own personal friend. Kirtti Singh, the second in descent from Bhogiswara, was also a younger son, who similarly obtained the principality as a personal favour from the Emperor as a result of a visit to Delhi. The most famous of the whole line, Siva Singh, was not so complaisant. He rebelled, and succeeded, in 1402 A. D., in establishing his independence; but three years afterwards he was conquered by the Musalmāns and carried off to Delhi, while his wife, Lakshimā Thākurānī, accompanied by the poet Vidyāpati, took refuge in Banauli close to Janakpur in Nepāl, and there committed *sati* when no news of her husband had been received for 12 years. The memory of Siva Singh is still preserved among the people, who point to a tank he built at Rājokhari and quote the proverb:—"The tank at Rājokhari is indeed a tank, and all others are puddles. King Siva Singh was indeed a king and all others are princelings." But his chief claim to fame is

*See History of Nepal and surrounding Kingdoms, by Professor C. Bendall, J. A. S. B., Vol. LXXII, Part I (1903).

that he was a royal patron of learning. Not only was his wife, Lakshimá, one of the few learned women of India, but his court was frequented by poets and scholars, of whom Vidyápati was at once the most famous and the most faithful. In this respect, Siva Singh was true to the traditions of his house. Like the Senas, who are said to have devoted their efforts to collecting *troops of poems rather* than to marshalling armies of soldiers, these Brâhman princes were noted for their encouragement of learning and the fine arts. Their courts were said to be the asylum of Sanskrit *belles lettres* and philosophy; and they lived immersed in the study of sacred books and poems.* One of the oldest known documents† in Darbhangá is a grant of Siva Singh's dated 1400 A.D., conveying the village of Bisapi (Bisfi in the Benípatí thána) to "the excellent poet Vidyápati." His successors continued to rule as dependent princes over the northern part of Tirhut till 1532, when it was finally placed in the direct charge of Muhammadan Governors.

Muhammadan Governors.

Though the northern part of Tirhut was ruled by its native princes until this late period, the south was under the direct control of Muhammadan Governors, and here the Muhammadan supremacy was far more pronounced. In the neighbourhood of Hájípur their ascendancy was won and maintained through war and convulsion. Hájípur, situated at the confluence of the Gandak with the Ganges, was a position of great strategical importance; it was long the head-quarters of the Governors of the Bengal kings, and was the scene of more than one rebellion; and the result is that the Musalmán rule has left many more traces in the south than in the north of Tirhut. The city was founded by and named after Hájí Ilyás, king of Bengal (1345-58), who invaded and ravaged Tirhut, harried the frontier between the Bengal kingdom and the Delhi Empire, and apparently built this fortress to consolidate his conquests. To punish him and check his growing power, Firoz Shâh invaded Tirhut in 1353, following hard after Hájí Ilyás, who retreated to Pandua. The expedition was short and decisive, and after the entire defeat of Hájí Ilyás, the Emperor returned to Delhi after appointing officers to uphold his authority in Tirhut.

Shortly after this, North Bihár appears to have been annexed by the kings of Jaunpur (*cir.* 1397), and it remained subject to them for 100 years. They were then deprived of this outlying portion of their dominions by the Emperor Sikandar Lodí, who

* *See* Vidyápati and his Contemporaries, and on some mediæval kings of Mithilá, by Dr. Grierson, Indian Antiquary, Vol. XIV, 1885, and Vol. XXVIII, 1899.

† The authenticity of this document is disputed, *see* J. A. S. B. Vol. LXVIII (1899), Part I, p. 96.

conquered Jaunpur, and then in 1499 advanced against Husain Shāh, king of Bengal. A treaty was concluded at Bārh, in which it was agreed that the Emperor should retain Bihār, Tirhut and *sarkār* Sāran, on condition that he did not invade Bengal; and Sikandar Lodī then swept down upon Tirhut. Unable to face the Imperial forces, the Rājā of Tirhut* advanced to meet him, made his submission, and was allowed to make terms on the payment of a fine amounting to several lakhs of rupees. The treaty between the Emperor and the Bengal king was not long observed, for in the early part of the 16th century Nasrat Shāh (1518-32) invaded Tirhut, put its Rājā to death and appointed his son-in-law, Alā-ud-dīn, to be its Governor. He then marched against Hājīpur, and having subdued the tract of country called after it, placed it in charge of another son-in-law named Makhdum Alim. Shortly afterwards (1538) the latter rose in revolt against his brother-in-law Mahmūd Shāh and made common cause with the Pathān adventurer Sher Shāh, who was at this time beginning the struggle which finally secured for him the throne of Delhi.

Mahmūd Shāh was the last independent king of Bengal, and after his fall North Bihār formed part of the Delhi empire. The allegiance of the local chieftains was however very uncertain, and they were practically independent. The country had not been fully subjugated, and it was filled with Afghān settlers, whose numbers were swelled by the accession of the Pathāns who had refused to join the service of the Mughals. Accordingly, when Dāūd Khān was raised to the throne of Bengal by the rebellious Pathān chiefs and broke out in open revolt in 1574, he found a number of trained soldiers ready to follow him in the strip of country north of the Ganges. Akbar sent orders to Khān Khānān to crush the rebel, and directed the Mughal chiefs of the neighbourhood and those Pathāns who continued loyal to the Mughals to assist him. It was not, however, until Akbar came in person to direct the operations that the fort of Hājīpur was taken and the rebels' power was broken. With the fall of Patna shortly afterwards, Bihār was lost to Dāūd Khān. It was thenceforward placed under a separate Mughal Governor, and Tirhut was included in the *Sūbah* or Province thus formed. Those chieftains who had assisted in establishing the Imperial authority were granted lands and *jāgīrs* in the Hājīpur *sarkār*, which included the southern portion of Darbhangā, and here they settled with their followers. Subsequently, in 1579, when they raised the standard of revolt, Azīm Khān, the successor of Akbar's great finance

* Elliot's History of India, Vol. V, p. 96.

minister Todar Mal, who was deputed to quell the rebellion, appears to have bought off the chiefs by confirming them in possession of the lands they had hitherto enjoyed and by granting fresh *jāgirs*. In this way, a large number of petty Musalmān chiefs, with their followers, were permanently settled in the south of Muzaffarpur and Darbhangā.

The history of Darbhangā is henceforward merged in that of the Province of which it formed a part, and it does not come into any prominence until the troubled times which accompanied the disruption of the Mughal Empire. Then the Afghān chiefs settled there began to intrigue with the Marāthās, who were raiding Bengal, and when Mustafā Khān, the discontented general of Alī Vardi Khān, rebelled (1744), they sided with him. On their return to Darbhangā, they opened negotiations with Zain-ud-dīn, the son-in-law of Alī Vardi Khān, who was at this time the *Sūbahdār* or Governor of Bihār. They marched to Patna, where the Governor received them in *darbār*; but towards its conclusion they treacherously assassinated him, and then proceeded to commit various savage atrocities: in the words of the author of the Riyazu-s-Salātin "they sacked the city and its suburbs, looted treasures, dishonoured women and children, and desolated a whole world." A vast number of Afghāns flocked to join them, till their army numbered about 40,000 horse and as many foot, besides a large train of artillery. But their triumph was short-lived, as Alī Vardi Khān marched up with a large army; and in spite of the fact that they had been joined by the Marāthās, signally defeated them near Bārh. A number of the Afghān generals were killed, and their wives and daughters captured, but Alī Vardi Khān treated them honourably, allowed them to depart for Darbhangā, and even gave them property in the district for their maintenance. The revolt was effectually crushed, and the Afghāns of Darbhangā, with their leaders slain and their Marāthā allies in full retreat, did not again take up arms.

EARLY ENGLISH ADMINISTRATION.

Darbhangā passed with the rest of Bihār under British rule in 1764, when the decisive battle of Buxar finally made the British masters of the Lower Provinces of Bengal. Since that time the history of the district has been confined to the establishment of order, the progress of settled government, the growth of cultivation, and the general advance of civilization. In the yearly days of British administration, a great part of the country was in a terrible state of lawlessness. The trade routes were infested by robbers, who preyed on the surrounding tenantry, crimes went unpunished, and even high officials were molested. The correspondence on the first 20 years of British

National Library, Calcutta. Acc. no. G 25336. 11.12.3.74.

rule presents an extraordinary picture of the lawless state of the country, the trade routes blocked by gangs of freebooting zamīndārs, large stretches of land lying waste owing to their depredations, the native revenue officers in league with and sharing the booty of these outlaws, black-mail extorted from the servants of the local officers who had occasion to pass up the river, and even the Chief Magistrate himself fired on in order that he might be intimidated into paying an illegal toll; his attempts to arrest the offenders set at naught, and their apprehension not effected until a year later, and then only through the agency of military force. To the south it was reported that the zamīndārs had set authority in defiance and assumed an independence from any legal subordination, that the situation of their estates among the jungles and on the banks of the Bāghmati enabled them to keep a force which no person in those parts could repel, and that they managed to maintain it by means of depredations on both sides of the river. To the north matters were no better, as the zamīndārs on the borders of Nepāl, secure in their jungle fastnesses, mocked at the authorities. "They are all to a man," writes the Judge in 1782, "villains and tyrants, and many of them have long been in a state of petty warfare with Government;" and about ten years later the Collector describes them as "almost savages, who never occupied themselves except in hunting." Many of the peasants, unable to bear the constant oppression of these petty tyrants, abandoned their houses and lands, and fled to Nepāl, so that "in every village there were several empty houses and many villages were quite waste."

The difficulties of administration were still further increased by external trouble owing to the incursions of the Nepalese. Attempts to induce the Gurkhas to aid our officers in the suppression of frontier dacoities were fruitless, and all remonstrances against their aggressions were unavailing. The Collector of Tirhut reported that between 1787 and 1813 upwards of 200 villages had been seized by them upon one or other unjustifiable pretext, and in 1815 he was again obliged to report that the zamīndārs complained that in consequence of the incursions of the Nepalese, who had come down and burnt their villages and plundered their property, their ryots had in many instances deserted and they were unable to pay their revenue. In the war which ensued, Jaynagar, close to the Nepāl frontier, had to be occupied by British troops, but no fighting took place in the district.

Since the establishment of peace with the Nepalese, Darbhanga has enjoyed an unbroken tranquillity. During the

Mutiny there were great fears that mutineers from adjoining districts would break into Darbhangá. One body entered the *Tarai* north of Purnea, and it was thought that they might descend on Tirhut from Nepál, but the rebels, failing to find the sympathy they expected, did not molest the district, and Darbhangá remained undisturbed.

SUMMARY

In concluding this sketch of the history of the district, the following summary* of its main features may be quoted :—"The history of Mithila does not centre round valiant feats of arms, but round courts engrossed in the luxurious enjoyment of literature and learning. But while Mithila's bid for fame does not rest on heroic deeds, it must be duly honoured as the home where the enlightened and learned might always find a generous patron, peace and safety. Before 1000 B. C. it was the great centre of Hindu learning; from the sixth to the third century before Christ, Vaisali, a town within its borders, was a Buddhist stronghold, and in the fifth century, after the sun of Buddhism had set, Mithila again springs into notice as the home of Hindu enlightenment. When eventually the first flood of Musalman invasion, coming down the Ganges, did overspread Bihar, it subsided, leaving Mithila with Hindu kings still holding courts, where poetry and learning were alone honoured. In this country with principalities apparently undisturbed by internal troubles and heedless of external convulsion; with courts devoted to learning and culture, where poets and philosophers lived in honour and affluence, our first impulse is to look for some traces of superior mental development in the mind of the people at large, at least for some grains of enlightenment fallen from the overflowing store of their masters. But the search is in vain, and it is a deplorable reflection on the Hindu social system that in Mithila, where it reached a high degree of development, its influences on the material and moral condition of the people at large were in the direction, not of amelioration, but of degradation. The priestly and intellectual aristocracy was so predominant that it set itself to suppress any attempt at social or mental emancipation outside its pale; and it was able to attain its object so effectually that at the present day it is in this same ancient centre of learning that ignorant fanaticism is most rampant and religious susceptibilities most inflammable, that the state of the lower classes is most degraded and most depressed, and that the proportion of the illiterate is the greatest."

* Muzaffarpur Survey and Settlement Report, by C. J. Stevenson-Moore, I. C. S.

CHAPTER III.

THE PEOPLE.

GROWTH OF THE POPULATION.

UNTIL the year 1875 Darbhangā formed part of the old district of Tirhut, and no separate enumeration of its inhabitants was taken. A rough census of the population of Tirhut was, however, carried out in 1802, when it was estimated that the population numbered 2,000,000 souls. Seventy years afterwards, when the first regular census was taken, it was reported to be 4,384,706, but this first census was wanting in accuracy, and in all probability it was nearer 4,500,000. In other words, the increase of the population of Tirhut, *i.e.*, of the districts of Muzaffarpur and Darbhangā, was no less than 125 per cent. during these seventy years, or 1·78 per cent. per annum.

According to statistics prepared for Darbhangā separately, it appears that the population of the district in 1872 was 2,136,898; and when the first census of Darbhangā as a separate district took place in 1881, it had risen to 2,630,496. A large portion of this increase was, however, due to greater accuracy in the enumeration. A careful census of the head-quarters subdivision in 1874 showed an apparent increase of 25 per cent. in the population during the space of 2½ years, one of which had been marked by general and severe distress; and a similar enumeration of the inhabitants of the Madhubanī subdivision in 1876 showed that there had been an increase of 20 per cent. during the 4 years which had elapsed since the census of 1872. The rate of increase disclosed is so extraordinary that it can only be explained as due to an inadequate enumeration in 1872. By the year 1891 the population had grown to 2,801,955, the increase during the decade being 6·5 per cent.; and the census of 1901 showed a further increase of 3·9 per cent., the total number of inhabitants being 2,912,611.

CENSUS OF 1901.

The decade preceding this census had not been a prosperous one. In 1891 the crops failed over a considerable area in the head-quarters and Madhubanī subdivisions, and relief operations were necessary. In 1895 the harvest was again a short one, and this was followed by the great crop failure of 1896. This affected the whole district except two of the three thānas in the Samastipur

subdivision: in the third thāna, Wārisnagar, the distress was less acute than in the rest of the district; and it was most severe in the western portion of the head-quarters and Madhubanī subdivisions. The number of persons requiring relief was greater than in any other district; but the recovery after the famine was at least equally rapid, and by the end of 1897-98 the people were almost restored to their normal condition. The result of the census was to show that, while there was only a slight increase (1·9 per cent.) in the Samāstipur subdivision, which was least affected by the famine, the growth was greatest (7·8 per cent.) in Madhubanī, where distress was most acute both in 1892 and 1897. The growth of population in the head-quarters subdivision was only 1·6 per cent., and here the Darbhangā thāna showed a slight decrease. This, however, was due to fortuitous circumstances, which, as explained below, caused an unusually large number of persons to be present in Darbhangā town at the time of the previous census; and if the urban area is excluded, the thāna shows a slight increase since 1891. The only other thāna in the district in which there was any decrease was Wārisnagar, where the population declined by 1·13 per cent.

Taking the variations of population since 1881, when the first census of Darbhangā as a separate district took place, one finds that the total increase has been just over 10 per cent., but more than three-fifths of this took place in the first decade. The Samāstipur subdivision lost 2·3 per cent. of its population in the ten years 1881-91, and though it recovered during the second decade some of the ground which it lost in the first, its present population is still less than it was in 1881. The growth in the head-quarters subdivision, which amounted to 8 per cent. in the first decade, has now fallen to 1·6 per cent.; and there has thus been a sudden arrest in the rise of population since 1891. In the Madhubanī subdivision the increase in the number of the inhabitants, which was very marked in 1881-91, continued, though it was considerably less rapid, falling from 12 to 7·85 per cent. Taking the district, then, as a whole, we find that the population of Samastipur is practically stationary, that the head-quarters subdivision is approaching a similar position, and that it is only in Madhubanī that any very large increase is to be found, and even here the rate of progress is appreciably less than formerly. Nor can these phenomena be ascribed to any special cause, such as emigration, famine, or plague. The movements of the population did not affect the results of the last census, and so far as permanent migration is concerned, the balance is in favour of the district. Plague may have affected the population of the

Dalsingh Sarai and Darbhangā thānas, but only slightly, and it did not extend to other parts before the census. In Madhubanī the reported death-rate in the preceding years had been higher than in any part of the district, and it had been most severely affected by the famine of 1897. In spite, however, of these unfavourable circumstances, Madhubanī showed the greatest addition to its numbers, an addition more than double that of the rest of the district. This is the great rice-growing subdivision, and there has apparently been some migration to it from the more crowded tracts in the south of the district; and the reason for the large increase appears to be that, while the other parts of Darbhangā have as dense a population as the land will support, there is still some room for expansion in Madhubanī.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

Density of population.

Although exceeded by the figures for a few individual districts, such as Howrah and Dacca, the portion of North Bihār which comprises the three districts of Sāran, Muzaffarpur and Darbhangā has a more teeming population than any other tract of equal size in Bengal or Eastern Bengal. Of these three districts Muzaffarpur is the most and Darbhangā the least densely populated, but the pressure on the soil even here is as great as 870 to the square mile. Lying between Muzaffarpur and Bhāgalpur, it partakes, in the west, of the character of the former, and in the east, of the character of the latter district. In only one of the western thānas does the density of population fall below 900, and in none of the eastern thānas does it reach 800 per square mile. The Samāstipur subdivision with 967 to the square mile is the most thickly crowded part of the district. It is eminently a rural tract, dependent almost entirely on agriculture; and the pressure of the agricultural population on the soil is already so great that further expansion under present conditions is neither to be expected nor desired. As, moreover, it includes about 40 square miles of *diāra*, which is practically uninhabited and mainly uncultivated, the pressure of population on the inhabited and productive area cannot be put at less than 1,000 per square mile. There is no very marked difference between the conditions of Madhubanī and the head-quarters subdivision so far as the strictly rural areas are concerned; and as the indications are that during the last decade the latter approached very near the limit of population which the soil is capable of supporting, it cannot be expected that Madhubanī will show any considerable further increase at the next census. These two subdivisions are mainly rice-producing tracts, and they cannot hope to support so large a population as Samāstipur, where the rich uplands produce more valuable crops. It may, therefore, be said of the district as a

whole that, under present conditions and in the absence of some economic revolution, there is little room for further increase of population.

Migration. Emigration as a remedy for over-population does not appear to have taken any real hold on the people as yet. The census of 1901 shows that out of every 10,000 persons born in the district only 382 are found elsewhere, and of these 255 are in contiguous districts. The proportion of emigrants is, in fact, lower than in any other district of North Bihār except Champāran and Purnea, where there is still much land available for cultivation. As regards immigration, 319 out of every 10,000 persons enumerated in the district were immigrants born elsewhere; and the volume of immigration is, therefore, nearly as large as that of emigration. So far as permanent movements are concerned, the balance is slightly in favour of Darbhangā, the number of emigrant females being nearly 4,000 less than that of those who have come in from other districts. Though the male emigrants number nearly 25,000 more than the male immigrants, the aggregate is only 58,443, and many of these are only temporary emigrants, who return to their homes after the labour season in other districts is over. The ebb and flow between Darbhangā and its neighbour is almost at a par; it loses to Bhāgalpur and gains in all other directions. The other emigrants go by preference to the neighbourhood of Calcutta or to Dacca and Eastern Bengal.

Sex. In common with other Bihār districts, Darbhangā has an excess of females over males, there being 106 females to every 100 males. Females preponderate in every thāna, and the preponderance has been steadily increasing since 1872. The causes appear to be obscure, but a partial clue may, perhaps, be found in the fact that the proportion of females to males is highest (over 110 per cent.) in Samāstipur and Dalsingh Sarai, and lowest (103 per cent.) in the Madhubanī subdivision. Pressure on the soil is greatest in the former area and least in the latter, and the relative preponderance of females probably indicates the extent to which temporary emigration is resorted to. The emigration to Bhāgalpur chiefly takes place from the northern and central parts of Darbhangā which adjoin it, and as it is largely of a permanent nature, the emigrants take their wives with them. But from the south of the district there is a good deal of temporary emigration to the eastern part of the Province during the labouring season, and in this case the emigrants usually leave their women-folk behind. Again, many of the marsh lands in the Gogrī thāna of Monghyr, which only produce a *rabi* crop and are submerged during the rains, are cultivated by men from the Dalsingh Sarai

thāna, who only leave their homes for the cold weather and rarely take their families with them.

Towns and villages.

Darbhangā is essentially a rural district. The great majority of the people are engaged in agricultural pursuits, and they have hitherto developed no tendency to flock into the towns. No new industrial centres of any importance have sprung up; and the rapid development of commerce and manufactures, which is so important a factor in the growth of an urban population, is unknown. Only 3 per cent. of the inhabitants live in urban areas, the remainder congregating in 3,233 villages. There are only four towns, viz., Darbhangā, Madhubanī, Rusera and Samāstipur, with an aggregate population of 103,392, Darbhangā alone accounting for over two-thirds of the number. Of these four towns, Rusera on the bank of the Gandak is slightly decadent, as the railway has diverted some of the traffic which was formerly borne by the river. Samastipur and Madhubanī, on the other hand, have benefited by the railway, especially the former. Darbhangā at the last census showed a decrease of nearly 10 per cent., which was partly due to its unhealthiness in the preceding years and partly to special causes. The population returned in 1891 was abnormally large on account of the presence of some 5,000 Brāhmans, who had come to partake of a feast given by the Mahārājā of Darbhangā. In 1901 the fact that the date was an auspicious one for weddings caused the absence of many of the inhabitants; plague had also appeared, and some of the residents whose permanent homes were elsewhere had begun to move away; and the result was that the number of persons present in the town on the day of the census was unusually small.

Language.*

The vernacular current in the district is the dialect of Bihāri Hindī called Maithilī, *i.e.*, the language of Mithilā or the country bounded on the north by the Himālayas, on the south by the Ganges, on the west by the Gandak and on the east by the river Kosi. The head-quarters of this dialect, which is called Tirhutiyā by people in other parts of India, are in the north and centre of the district, where the Maithil Brāhmans muster in large numbers; in the south of Darbhangā it is spoken in a slighly corrupt form. It is spoken in its greatest purity by Maithil Brāhmans and the other high castes, while the lower castes have a habit of clipping their final syllables.

Most of the Muhammadans speak the Maithilī of their Hindu neighbours in a corrupt form mixed up with Arabic and Persian

* This sketch of the language of Darbhangā is taken from Dr. Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India, Vols. IV and V.

words. It is estimated that 337,000 out of the 338,667 Musalmāns in the district speak this corrupt Maithilī, or Jolāhā Bolī, as it is called from the name of the caste of Muhammadan weavers, who are numerous in Darbhangā. The upper classes, as well as the more educated Hindus, speak Hindustāni or Urdū, the number of speakers of this language being returned as about 4,000.

Written character.

No less than three different alphabets are in use in the tract in which Maithilī is spoken. The Maithilī character proper, which is closely akin to the Bengali, is that used by the Maithil Brāhmans, and the character which is employed by all the other castes is the Kaithī. The Devanāgarī character is used by a few of the educated classes, and is understood and read by all persons who pretend to a liberal education; and, besides this, the Urdū character is employed by the better educated Muhammadans.

Literature.

Maithilī is the only one of the Bihāri dialects which has a literary history. For centuries the Pandits of Mithilā have been famous for their learning, and more than one Sanskrit work of authority has been written by them. One of the few learned women of India whose name has come down to us, was Lakshimā Thākurānī, who, according to tradition, lived in the middle of the 15th century A.D. Nor was the field of vernacular literature neglected by them. The earliest vernacular writer of whom we have any record was the celebrated Vidyāpati Thakkura, who graced the court of Mahārājā Siva Singh of Sugāonā, and who flourished about the same time. As a writer of Sanskrit works he was an author of considerable repute, but it is upon his dainty songs in the vernacular that his fame chiefly rests. He was the first of the old master-singers whose short religious poems, dealing principally with Rādhā and Krishna, exercised such an important influence on the religious history of Eastern India. His songs were adopted and enthusiastically recited by the celebrated Hindu reformer Chaitanya, who flourished at the beginning of the 16th century, and, through him, became the house-poetry of the Lower Provinces. Vidyāpati Thakkura or, as he is called in the vernacular, Bidyāpat Thākur, had many imitators in Mithilā itself, of whom we know nothing except the names of the most popular, and a few stray verses.

Amongst other writers in Maithilī may be mentioned Manbodh Jhā, who died about the year 1788 A.D. He composed a *Haribans*, or poetical life of Krishna, of which ten cantos are still extant, and enjoy great popularity. The drama has had several authors in Mithilā, where the local custom has been to write the body of a play in Sanskrit, but the songs in the vernacular. There has been a remarkable revival of Maithilī literature during

the past few years, and at least one author deserving of special note has come to the front, Chandra Jhā, who has shown remarkable literary powers. He has written a *Mithilābhāshā Rāmāyana*, and a translation, with an edition of the original Sanskrit text, of the *Purusha-parīkshā* of Vidyāpati Thakkura, the perusal of which will well repay the student.

CHARACTER OF THE PEOPLE.

Maithilī, with its strangely complex system of verbal conjugation, has been described by Dr. Grierson as the dialect of a nationality which has carried conservatism to the excess of uncouthness. "Mithilā," he writes, "a country with an ancient history, traditions of which it retains to the present day, is a land under the domination of a sept of Brāhmans extraordinarily devoted to the mint, anise, and cummin of the law. For centuries it has been a tract too proud to admit other nationalities to intercourse on equal terms, and has passed through conquest after conquest, from the north, from the east, and from the west, without changing its ancestral peculiarities. The story goes that at the marriage of Rāmachandra,* the Brāhmans of Mithilā showed the same uncivilized pride which is the characteristic of their descendants of the 19th century. This Brahmanical domination has left ineffaceable marks upon the nature of the rest of the population. Mithilā or Tirhut is one of the most congested parts of India. Its inhabitants increase and multiply and impoverish the earth, nor will they seek other means of life than agriculture, or other lands on which to practise the one art with which they are acquainted."

There can be little doubt that the character of the people has been profoundly influenced by their geographical isolation. The river Gandak proved in the days of the Muhammadan invasion a curiously strong barrier; and while the countries to the west of the Gandak and south of the Ganges were constantly subjected to the turbulent influences that accompanied the rule of the Mughal dynasty, the country of Mithilā, the modern Tirhut, remained more or less at peace under Hindu kings. The results of this seclusion may be seen even in the present day. The people are more backward and less enterprising than those of Sāran. In the time of the Mutiny the rebels found fighting recruits in Sāran, but none in Muzaffarpur or Darbhangā; and at the present time the labourers of Sāran go far afield to seek labour, and are to be found even in the furthest corners of Assam, while the labourers of the other two districts leave their homes

* The curse pronounced by Rāmachandra on the Mithilā Brāhmans was:—"Heroes at home, cowards in the battle-field, ever quarrelling among yourselves, and inordinately full of family pride, shall ye be in Mithilā."

in far fewer numbers. The people of Sāran are on the whole self-assertive, energetic and alert, while those of Darbhangā, living in a country which has for ages been secluded and far removed from the beaten paths of progress, are conservative, unenterprising and ignorant. A curious instance of this ignorance was seen a few years ago when some troops marched through the district, an event to which the inhabitants were unaccustomed. When the first relief went through, the villages were deserted by the women. The men came round in crowds to stare at the soldiers, and on one occasion, when the latter broke out into a cheer for some reason, the spectators fled across country in the greatest terror. After this, it became a regular practice for the soldiers to use this simple device to rid themselves of a staring throng when they were eating their food. Though the troops were a model of good behaviour, the movement of the second relief caused even greater excitement. They were Baluchis, and their advent was regarded with dread; and it took all the tact of the European residents and educated native gentlemen to assure the people that they had nothing to fear.

RELIGIONS.

Hindus and Muhammadans.

The great bulk of the inhabitants are Hindus, who with a total of 2,559,128 account for 87·86 per cent. of the population; and practically all the remainder are Muhammadans, who number 352,691 or 12·11 per cent. of the population. They muster most strongly in the Darbhangā thāna, where they form over a fifth of the population, and the proportion is lowest in Dalsingh Sarai, where they form little more than one-twentieth of the population. The Muhammadans conquered Tirhut, but they did not colonize it, and the tide of conquest passed over the land without shaking the firm roots which Hinduism had struck in the minds of the people. Islām has accordingly never held a strong position in Tirhut, and the country has always retained its pronounced Hinduism. Darbhangā, in particular, is the head-quarters of the Maithil Brāhmans, and Muhammadans form a comparatively unimportant section of the community.

Christians.

The number of persons belonging to other religions is only 792, and of these 710 are Christians. There are several small Christian communities of different denominations, but no Missions of any importance; and the native Christians number only 296. There is a small Roman Catholic Mission at Samāstipur; a Methodist Mission and a Zanāna Bible and Medical Mission are also at work in the district.

RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS.

In recent years the only religious movements of any note occurred in the year 1893-94, when there was an ebullition of religious excitement among the Hindus, which found expression

in this as in other Bihār districts in the anti-kine-killing agitation, the ploughmen's begging movement and the tree-daubing mystery.

Anti-kine-killing agitation.

The first movement appears to have been due to the activity of the Gorakshinī Sabhās or associations for the protection of cattle. These societies, the legitimate object of which is the care of diseased, aged, and otherwise useless cattle, started a crusade against the killing of kine, sent out emissaries to preach their doctrines, and collected subscriptions to further their objects. The relations between Hindus and Muhammadans soon became severely strained, and in various parts of Bihār the feeling aroused among the former manifested itself in the rescue of cattle from Muhammadans, and in objections to their slaughtering cattle and selling the meat. It was found that these institutions existed all over the district, and there was some fear that their preaching, at times ill-informed and malicious, might cause serious trouble by creating a spirit of antagonism among the Muhammadans. In spite, however, of a great deal of slumbering antipathy, the uneasy feeling which prevailed gradually quieted down, and no overt act of disturbance took place.

Ploughmen's begging movement.

The ploughmen's begging movement, or as it should more properly be called, the Mahādeo *pūjā*, was a curious exhibition of religious feeling which occurred soon afterwards. All ploughmen, the story goes, were obliged to give their cattle three days' rest and go round the neighbouring villages begging. With the proceeds three wheaten cakes were prepared—one for the ploughman himself, one for his cattle, while the third had to be buried under their stalls. This penance was performed by the people in consequence of a rumour that it had been imposed by the god Mahādeo to expiate the sin committed by the agricultural community in overworking their cattle. For some time the people continued to carry out, with scrupulous care, the orders which they supposed had been given them by their god. The remarkably elaborate nature of this penance gives reason, however, to suppose that it had been carefully thought out; and its inception and spread among the villagers has been attributed to the efforts of those interested in the Gorakshinī agitation to keep the movement afloat.

The tree-daubing mystery.

Tree-daubing was another widespread movement, the meaning of which afforded many grounds for speculation. By the most reliable reports it commenced about the latter end of February 1894 in the north-east corner of Bihār in the neighbourhood of the Janakpur shrine, which lies across the border in Nepāl. The movement consisted in marking trees with daubs of mud, in which

were stuck hairs of different animals, buffaloes' hair and pigs' bristles predominating. It slowly spread through the Gangetic districts, eastwards into Bhāgalpur and Purnea and westwards through many of the districts of the United Provinces. In the South Gangetic districts, it was traced in several instances to wandering gangs of *sādhus*.

As an explanation of the movement, it was suggested at the time that the sign was intended as an advertisement of the shrine of Janakpur; and this view was accepted officially. Others, however, pointed out that it was suspicious that this movement should have followed the anti-kine-killing agitation, which contained a perceptible element of hostility to the administration held, and that it was part of a demonstration deliberately promoted against British rule. Others again believed that the marks were simply due to cattle rubbing against the trees.*

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

The great majority of the people are agriculturists, dependent for their livelihood on seasonable rainfall and the fertility of the soil, and this dependence on the bounty of nature finds expression in their religious observances. In the month of Kārtik (October-November) it is usual to worship the cow, which provides milk for food, dung for manure, and oxen for the plough. In Māgh (January), after the oxen, the ploughmen and the plough have been given a six weeks' rest, the new year is ushered in by a quaint ceremony called *hal prabhā*. On the fifth day after the new moon the villagers take out the oxen and plough, and after mending the latter, the head of the household takes them to a piece of waste land, where he or the ploughman drives a furrow in a circle, which is passed over two and a half times. There the oxen are worshipped, being given fodder to eat and garlanded with flowers; and the ploughman and plough are then taken to the house, where the plough is worshipped by all the members of the household. It is held upright by the ploughman, the ploughshare resting on the ground; the iron tip of the share is covered with paddy; and flowers are sprinkled over it. The ceremony ends with the ploughman receiving all the paddy used to cover the plough. According to popular tradition, this ritual was initiated by Janaka, the ancient king of Mithilā, in time of drought; he bears the title *Sir-dhwaj*, or he whose ensign is the plough (*sir*); and the name of the day set aside for the ceremony, *Siri Panchami*, on which the educated worship Swaraswati, the goddess of learning, is said to be derived from the same word. Even the upper and middle classes offer oblations to the spirits of their ancestors in

* For a more detailed account of this movement and its meaning, *see* The tree-daubing of 1894, Calcutta Review, January 1898.

the belief that they will help their descendants by procuring timely rain and bumper crops in gratitude for the *pindas* offered to them. These ceremonies, called *parvans*, are four in number, and are celebrated on the day of a full or new moon. One called *Jar-pak*, which takes place in the month of Baisakh (April-May) when the *rabi* crop is reaped, consists of the offering of barley (*jar*) the produce of the spring harvest. The second is *Navadak* (the new rain), which takes place in the month of Asārh (June-July) with the breaking of the monsoon. The third, the *Shashtipak parvan*, is celebrated when the *bhadoi* crop is reaped in Bhādo (September-October); and the fourth, the *Navānna* (new crop), in Aghan at the time of the harvesting of the *aghani* crop on which the whole country-side depends.

Each portion of the agricultural year is marked by religious observances or superstitious practices which emphasize the anxiety of the people to enlist the powers of nature on their side. The anxiety with which the cultivator watches for the monsoon is intense, and should it fail, he endeavours to bring down the rain by appealing to the god of rain. It is believed by the vulgar that the cry of a frog is most readily heard by Indra. In a year of drought, therefore, the low-caste females of a village assemble in the evening, collect water from the pitchers of five houses, and seize a frog, which they put in a small earthen pot, together with water taken from the five pitchers. The pot, with the frog shut in it by an earthen cover, is put in the hollow wooden cup into which the lever used for crushing rice falls. Then the lever is raised with the foot and dropped on to the frog; this barbarously cruel performance being repeated until the frog croaks, which no doubt he does, unless killed with too great suddenness. Meanwhile, the women sing songs in a loud voice about the dearth of water. When the frog has been killed, its dead body is thrown on the roof of an equally credulous and superstitious neighbour, who in his turn abuses the thrower at the top of his voice, the belief being that this is pleasing to the god Indra (who is described in the Rig Veda as having eyes like a frog), and that he will be induced to send rain upon the earth.

The months of Bhādo and Asin (September and October) again are marked by many religious observances and ceremonies, because this is the most critical season of the year to the cultivator, when he must have rain. Towards the end of the former month the agriculturists have to observe the fast of *Ananta-brat* in gratitude for the ingathering of the *bhadoi* harvest and in the hope of further prosperity. During the first fortnight of Kuār or Asin,

since it is on the rain of this period that a successful harvest of the *aghani* and moisture for the *rabi* depend, they devote much time to religious offerings and oblations to their deceased ancestors. This is followed by *Naurātra* or nine nights of abstinence from worldly enjoyments and worship of the goddess Durgā. When the *rabi* sowings have been completed and the *Naurātra* is over, there follows a day of universal rejoicing, when alms are given to every Brāhman who produces seedlings of barley, which here, as in other districts of Bihār and the Upper Provinces, forms one of the chief *rabi* crops.

During Kārtik (October-November), when the paddy harvest is taking ear, many devotional performances are observed, especially by the women and unmarried girls. They bathe before dawn and worship the sun as the producer of rain every morning until *Purnamāsi* or the period of the full moon, when large crowds of the people, both male and female, repair to bathe at the confluence of the Ganges and Gandak, and offer the holy Ganges water to Mahādeo or the Great God; it is then that the famous Sonpur Fair is held. Towards the end of this month the longest of all fasts is observed by the people, especially females, who before breaking it offer sweetmeats, vegetables and cow's milk to the Sun God. Even the pastime of the unmarried girls during this month is marked by a devotional spirit born of the mental suspense pending the arrival of the rice crop to maturity. All the children and young women go singing together to the fields for the feeding of what are called their *sama* and *chako*, clay images made to personify the agricultural gods, one representing the male and the other the female god. They do this every evening for the whole month of Kārtik, by the end of which the *aghani* should be fit for reaping; and on the 30th day they take the images to a neighbouring river or pond, and there submerge them; some even take the trouble to go to the river Ganges for the purpose. This is chiefly a female pastime, but the young children of either sex are allowed to take part. No adult male, however, is allowed to be present. Placing the images by turn in several plots (producing paddy, *marua*, maize, etc.), the females make a circle round them and sing songs, dancing round and round till late in the night. One curious part of this observance is that, presumably to disarm scandal, an image of a *chugla* or backbiter is set up, and the moustaches of the image are burnt, as a symbolical punishment for backbiting.

When the *rabi* crop is assured, the devotional attitude is abandoned, anxiety is at an end, and on the 1st Chait the people celebrate the *Holi* festival, breaking forth in unrestrained

and hilarious enjoyment. The vitality which religious observances connected with agriculture still enjoy here arises no doubt from the almost entire dependence of agriculturists on the rainfall for their immunity from famine, whose grim visits have been too frequent to be easily forgotten.

Mock marriages of mango groves.

Among Hindus, to plant a mango tree is considered a religious act, productive of spiritual benefit, and in this district nearly 88 per cent. of the population is composed of Hindus. The popular belief is that the rain-water falling from the leaves of a mango tree is converted into honey and received by the spirits of the ancestors of its planter, as well as by himself, when after death, he abides in *Swarga* or heaven. In fact, the approach of a mango grove to maturity is celebrated, by even the humblest cultivator, with all the show of a marriage ceremony. When the trees are sufficiently grown to give promise of fruit, the villagers repair to a place of worship erected in the grove, where a Brâhman officiates. The priest, after calling down the blessing of the gods, takes an earthen pitcher in which he places water, a few copper coins, and some *kasaili*. Over the top of the pitcher are placed mango leaves, and resting on them, a country lamp full of *ghi*, which is lighted. To make the symbolical ceremony complete, a bamboo basket containing a bride's belongings and dowry on a miniature scale is provided; a wooden post, called *yûpa*, is erected in the mango grove as a witness to the marriage; and the priest having finished his worship, vermilion, the emblem of completed marriage, is applied to the mango tree, as to a bride. Then a sacrificial fire is set alight, and the owner and his wife go round their grove; the former holding a mango leaf with a silver coin on it, over which a third person accompanying them from time to time sprinkles milk. This part of the rite is called *pradakshin*, the ordinary Sanskrit term for going round a sacrificial fire with the right side towards it. The grove is then dedicated to Narâyan, who is regarded as the bridegroom, and the ceremony ends with a feast to the priest and other Brahmans. But the emoluments of the priest who officiates do not end here, for he is usually given money, *sajjadâr*, *i.e.*, a bed with cushions, and one of the trees. It is thus not unusual to find an isolated tree in the middle of a mango grove in the possession of a Brâhman. The ryot willingly allows to the priest the enjoyment of the fruits, but objects to him cutting the tree down. The priest, on the other hand, owing to the difficulty of watching isolated trees, usually attempts to cut and sell the timber when the tree has attained a sufficient growth, thereby violating the religious faith of the planter.

Mock marriages of tanks.

Similar ceremonies of marriage are performed in the case of newly excavated wells and tanks. The interesting feature in the marriage of tanks is the flight of the *dudh-pion* or the milk-drinker. A small quantity of milk is procured, and a Brāhman is induced by a money consideration to drink it. Having drunk it, he runs away to the distance of a mile, the people after him pelting him with clods of earth. He thus personates the *asūras* or enemies of the god; and the *jat* or wooden pole with a *trisul* or a three-pronged iron spear at its top, fixed in the centre of the tank, is an emblem of the weapon with which Mahādeo fought and overthrew them. It is now, however, popularly believed to be set up for the purpose of counteracting the evil eye.

Principal castes.

The numbers and distribution of all the castes exceeding 25,000 persons are given in the Statistical Appendix. Among Hindus the most numerous castes are the Goālās or Ahīrs (383,653), Dosādhs (207,843), Brāhmans (197,967), Bābhans (154,345), Dhānuks (151,992), Koiris (144,673), Mallāhs (116,557) and Chamārs (105,739); while the Kewats, Khatwes, Kurmīs, Musahars, Rājputs, Tāntis and Telis all number between 50,000 and 100,000. Among the Muhammadans, Sheikhs (153,014) are most numerous, but Jolāhās (57,528), Dhuniās (39,884) and Kunjrās (39,397) are also well represented. Two small castes, the Deohars and Dhīmars, are peculiar to the district. The Deohars or Debhars of Darbhangā are said to form a separate caste. It is supposed that they may be an offshoot from the Goālās, but the two communities are now quite distinct. Their traditional occupation is that of inoculators, but at the present day they are largely employed as vaccinators. The Dhīmars have a tradition that they came originally from Benares in the retinue of a Rājā named Sibai Singh. They are probably an offshoot of some other caste, but it is difficult to ascertain which. Their name seems to be derived from Dhībara, a fisherman, which is also the origin of the word Tiyar. They are sometimes affiliated to the Kahārs, but beyond the fact that some are *pālki*-bearers, there seems to be no special connection with this caste. They believe the parching of grain to be their traditional occupation, but, as noted above, some now serve as *pālki*-bearers, and others work in lac, deal in fish, and serve as masons, menial servants and day-labourers.

Brāhmans.

The Brāhmans, though not so strong numerically as the Goālās and Dosādhs, are by far the most important caste in the district on account of their priestly influence. The great majority belong to the Maithil or Tirhutiyā sub-caste, of which there are 3 main divisions, based on a classification said to have

been made by Rājā Hara Singh Deva, viz., Srotriyā or Sote (high), Jog (middle) and Jaiwār (low). There is also a fourth division, Panjibaddh, comprising the offspring of intermarriages between the Srotriyā and the Jog classes, whose rank is intermediate between these two. These groups are to some extent hypergamous, *i.e.*, it is considered right that a man should bestow his daughter in his own or a higher group, but this is not compulsory, and if he is poor, he will often, for a sufficient consideration, give her to a man of a lower grade. It is simply a question of money, and the party which ranks higher receives money from the other side, whether it be that of the bride or of the bridegroom; the payment to a bridegroom is called *tilak*, and that for a bride *shulkā*. The amount varies according to the wealth and relative rank of the parties, and the minimum payment is said to be Rs. 35. Some of the poorer Brāhmans of higher rank will occasionally marry a number of wives of the lower grades for the sake of the money paid by their parents. This practice, which is said to be falling into disfavour, has given rise to a class called Bikauwās or vendors, who derive their name from the practice of selling themselves or their minor sons to girls belonging to lower groups. Some have as many as 40 or 50 wives, who live with their own parents and are visited at intervals by their husbands. Bikauwā Brāhmans who have married into lower groups are not received on equal terms by the members of their own class, but the women whom they marry consider themselves raised by the alliance. A succession of marriages into higher circles will gradually raise the position of a family, and, in the same way, a family gradually sinks in social estimation if all its matrimonial alliances are with persons of lower rank.

In addition to *gotras* or exogamous groups, the Maithil Brāhmans are distinguished according to their *mel* and *dih*. The *mel*, or origin, is the name of the village where the earliest known members of a *gotra* lived, while the *dihs* refer to the villages where their descendants subsequently settled. Thus the early progeny of Batsā Rishi lived, it is said, in a place called Karmahe, and this is the *mel* of all members of the Batsā *gotra*. Subsequent generations gradually spread abroad and settled in Majhaurā, Tarauni and other places, and the descendants of the residents in each place are distinguished accordingly as Karmahe Majhaurā, Karmahe Tarauni, etc.: these are called *dihs*. The classification of Maithil Brāhmans according to *mels* and *dihs*, like the other measures connected with their matrimonial arrangements, is ascribed to Rājā Hara Singh Deva.

It was effected in connection with the preparation of their pedigrees, and they attach much importance to it. It is a factor in estimating the relative rank of different members of the sub-caste, but it constitutes no bar to marriage. There is no objection to marrying a woman of the same *dih*, provided she does not belong to the same *gotra* or fall within the prohibited degrees of relationship.

Great importance is attached to purity of blood, and for this purpose the leading Maithil Brāhmans, with their pandits, their *pānjiārās* or genealogists, and their *ghataks* or marriage-brokers, meet at various places in Tirhut for the purpose of settling disputed questions of caste custom and of arranging marriages. They maintain one of the most extraordinary series of records in existence, called the *pānj*. It is composed of an immense number of palm-leaf manuscripts containing an entry for the birth and marriage of every pure Brāhman in Mithilā and going back for many hundred years—the *pānjiārās*, indeed, say for more than a thousand. These *pānjiārās* go on regular annual tours, entering the names of the Brāhmans born in each village during the last year; for no Brāhman can marry any woman who has not been entered in the *pānj*.

In arranging marriages the parties are assisted by *ghataks*, who carry in their memory the pedigrees of the Brāhmans of 10 or 12 villages, and who bring the parties together and help them to settle the amount of the consideration to be paid, for which service they receive a minimum fee of Rs. 2. When the parties have come to an agreement they go to the *pānjiārā* (Sanskrit *panjikār*), who keeps the *pānj* or record of pedigrees; and after satisfying himself that the bride and bridegroom may lawfully be married, he grants them a written permission or *siddhānta patra*, for which he receives a fee of one rupee. *Pānjiārās* are said to have been first appointed by Rājā Hara Singh Deva, in consequence of one of his ministers having married in ignorance a lady within the prohibited degrees of relationship. The office is now hereditary, but, before practising, the candidate must obtain the permission of the Mahārājā of Darbhangā, who is the head of the Maithil Brāhmans, and who, after satisfying himself of his fitness, presents him with two loin cloths in token of his approval.

Marriages may be arranged at any time, but it is the fashion to meet for the purpose at certain regular assemblies held for the purpose towards the end of the *lagan* or marriage season. The largest of these gatherings is held at Saurāth, and extends over a week. Carpets are spread under the trees, and the Brāhmans

assemble, gaily clad in crimson with flowing turbans. The occasion is one of unwonted rowdiness, and the crowd indulges in uproarious laughter, hooting and abusive shouts. When a marriage is decided on, the ceremony is at once performed at the house of the bride's father, whither the bridegroom proceeds, quite informally, accompanied only by a few of his near relations.

The Bābhans are the only other high caste with a strength of over 100,000. They are an influential agricultural caste, who form about 5 per cent. of the population; they are generally well-to-do, many of them being petty zamīndārs, but they are much addicted to litigation, and are notorious for their quarrelsome disposition. Like the Rājputs, they bear the names of Singh and Rai; and like the Brāhmans they are called Pānde, Misr, Thākur and Tewārī. They are commonly regarded as of mixed descent, and various legends are current as to the genesis of the caste. These traditions, however, are not recognized by the Bābhans themselves who claim to be true Brāhmans. According to their own account, they differ from Brāhmans only in having taken to agricultural pursuits and in having given up the principal functions of priestcraft, viz., teaching the Vedas, officiating as priests and receiving alms. They therefore call themselves Bhuinhār Brāhmans, and contend that many of their religious ceremonies are the same as among the Brāhmans, and that even at the present day Maithil Brāhmans who secede from their own community are admitted among them on condition that they give up priestly occupations. Bābhans.

There is no doubt however that, in the estimation of the Hindu public, they now constitute an entirely distinct caste. Their degradation from the status of Brāhmans must be very ancient, and it probably dates back to the period of the downfall of Buddhism. It has been pointed out that Bābhan is merely the Pālī form of Brāhman, and that the word is often found in Asoka's edicts. It has therefore been conjectured that those now known as Bābhans remained Buddhists after the Brāhmans around them had reverted to Hinduism, and so the Pālī name continued to be applied to them; while the synonym Bhuinhār or Bhumihāraka is explained as referring to their having seized the lands attached to the old Buddhist monasteries. In support of this theory, it may be mentioned that in this Province they are practically confined to the area covered by the ancient kingdom of Magadha, which long remained the centre of Buddhism.

The other castes require only a brief notice. The Goālās are by far the largest caste, and account for no less than one-eighth of Goālās.

the total population; they are most numerous in the north of the district. Their hereditary occupation is that of herdsmen, but with this they combine cultivation, and a large number have given up pastoral pursuits altogether and are only tillers of the soil. They are extremely quarrelsome and are noted *lāthiāls*; they are given to that exasperating form of theft which consists of petty thefts of crops from granaries and fields, and never lose an opportunity of grazing their cattle on a neighbour's crops; and they have an unenviable reputation as cattle-lifters.

Dosādhs. The Dosādhs, with an aggregate of 207,843, constitute a very numerous caste at the bottom of the social scale. They are one of the most useful castes in the district, owing to their value as agricultural labourers, but socially they form a very degraded community. Their religion is a sort of demon or fetish worship, and they sacrifice to appease the wrath of all the gods. The main features of their worship are sacrifices of pigs and libations of liquor, the ceremonies usually ending in a drunken orgy and a copious consumption of swine's flesh. They are despised by the Hindus generally, and appear to have traces of aboriginal descent. They support themselves by labour and cultivation; but many of them are notorious thieves, and, apparently on the principle of setting a thief to catch a thief, they have long all but monopolized the post of *chaukidār* or village watchman in this district.

Dhānuks. Tradition relates that in prehistoric periods, when Tirhut was under a Brahmanic *régime*, the bulk of the labouring and industrial population were Dhānuks. Their name implies that they were originally bowmen, who obtained their livelihood as hunters; and there are some grounds for believing that they are of aboriginal descent. The common belief is that they are descended from a Chamār and a female Chandāl; but notwithstanding the degraded parentage assigned to them and the probability that they are really of non-Aryan descent, they now occupy a respectable position in the social scale. Personal service, palanquin-bearing and agriculture are their chief occupations; they are largely employed as *barāhils* or servants to zamīndārs, and are also engaged as agricultural labourers.

Koiris. The Koiris (144,673) are skilful and industrious cultivators, who are the best tenants to be found in the district. They are a purely agricultural caste, who also work as market gardeners and rear vegetables, potatoes, chillies and other crops requiring skilful treatment. They are the market gardeners of Bihār; and the production of opium in this district is almost entirely due to their labours.

The Mallāhs are a boating and fishing, as well as an agricultural, caste; but those engaged in the two former pursuits have a lower position in the social scale than the agricultural classes. Mallāhs.

The Chamār is one of the most indispensable of village servants, and in every hamlet or group of hamlets throughout the district will be found the houses of one or more Chamārs. He is a worker in leather, and supplies the village with their whipthongs and their shoes, and with leather fastenings for their carts: he is also one of the triumvirate of petty village officials, and with his coadjutors, the *chaukidār* and the *gorait*, publishes by beat of drum all official proclamations. His wife, the Chamain, holds the important position of village midwife, and attends women of all castes during their confinement. In return for these services, the Chamār receives a small donation of grain from each ryot at the *aghani* harvest, and a present of Re. 1 or Rs. 2 annually from the zamīndār. The hides of all animals dying in the village are his traditional perquisite, and, in consequence of this, whenever a cow or other animal dies under suspicious circumstances, rightly or wrongly, he is almost invariably suspected of having caused its death. Chamārs.

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC HEALTH.

VITAL STATISTICS.

A comparison of vital statistics for any lengthy periods is rendered impossible by the changes in the system of registering births and deaths which have taken place from time to time. In 1869 the duty of reporting deaths was imposed on the village *chaukidārs*, and in 1876 the system was extended to births; but the returns received were so incomplete that they were soon discontinued and, except in the towns, deaths alone were registered until 1892, when the collection of statistics of births as well as of deaths was ordered, and the system now in vogue was introduced.

So far as they be accepted—and they are sufficiently accurate for the purpose of calculating the approximate growth of the population and of showing the relative healthiness or unhealthiness of different years—the returns submitted since that year show that conditions were generally unfavourable during the nine years ending in 1900. The mortality was exceptionally heavy in 1892, 1894, 1896, and 1900; in the first three years the deaths outnumbered the births, the death-rate in 1896 being 41·92 per mille, the highest ever recorded in the district; while plague broke out in 1900, and there was also a severe epidemic of cholera, causing 17,500 deaths. There was scarcity in the head-quarters and Madhubani subdivision in 1891-92; there was famine in 1897; and in 1898 and 1899 there were floods in the south-west of the district. In spite, however, of these adverse conditions, the number of births reported exceeded the deaths by nearly 66,000. Since the year 1900, the population has been far more progressive, though there have been repeated visitations of plague. The death-rate has not exceeded 34·9 per mille, and there has been a very marked increase in births, the birth-rate averaging 43·35 per mille annually and rising in 1902 and 1904 to over 45 per mille. The number of births during the five years ending in 1905 consequently exceeded that of deaths by 153,000, the excess

being 87,000 more than that recorded in the preceding nine years.

Taking the decade ending in 1905, the first half showed a mortality of 87,300 per annum, or 31 per mille, and in the second half the deaths rose to an average of 95,670, or 33 per mille; but the growth in the number of births was far greater, and the annual average increased from 106,500 in the first to 126,500 in the second quinquennium. Although, therefore, the mortality increased by 8,000 a year in the second period, the increase in the number of births (20,000) was more than twice as great.

PRINCIPAL DISEASES. Fever.

According to the returns submitted year by year, by far the greatest mortality is due to fever, but the ignorant *chaukidár* responsible for the returns is far from being a medical expert. Drawn as he often is from the lowest dregs of the people, he can diagnose only a few well-known diseases like cholera and small-pox, and many others are indiscriminately classed under the general head of fever. It may, however, safely be assumed that when the mortality ascribed to fever is unusually high in any district, the greater part of the excess is due to malarial affections; and it is noticeable that since 1892, when the present system of mortality returns was instituted, the death-rate from fever has eight times exceeded that for the Province as a whole. During these years the mortality has never fallen below 20 per mille, but, on the other hand, it has never risen above 23·3 per mille, except in 1905, when it amounted to 26·6 per mille and in the three unhealthy years 1894—96. In the first of these three years it was nearly 30 per mille, and in the last it was no less than 31·15 per mille, the highest ever recorded in Darbhanga. Since that year the mortality from fever has remained fairly steady, and in the four years ending in 1904 it ranged only between 65,000 and 67,000 per annum, rising, however, to 77,600 in 1905. In that year only 400 villages escaped its ravages.

Regarding the different types of fever prevalent in the district, the Civil Surgeon, Captain M. H. Thornely, I.M.S., writes as follows:—Assuming that the term fever is to include all diseases in which a rise of the body temperature is a prominent or important symptom, the most prevalent fevers, approximately in order of frequency, are (1) malarial fevers; (2) fevers of short duration dependent on such conditions as the presence of worms in the intestine, exposure to heat, and local catarrhs and inflammations, such as coryza and bronchitis; and (3) epidemic fevers.

Though not so prevalent as in most other districts of Bengal, malaria is widespread, and accounts for the largest number of deaths. It is most severe and prevalent in the north of the district near the frontier of Nepāl, and in the south-east corner, regions which appear to be badly drained and mostly given up to rice cultivation. Most of the recognized types are found. It is only in the water-logged parts of the district just named that cases of extreme enlargement of the spleen with cachexia are at all common. As regards the diseases in which fever is a symptom of less importance, intestinal parasites, round worms, thread worms, and ankylostomdasis are extremely common in this district and are generally associated with pyrexia at some stage. Ankylostomdasis probably accounts for a large number of the deaths put down as due to fever. The epidemic fevers are small-pox, chicken-pox, measles, plague, enteric fever. Chicken-pox is not common, but occasionally becomes epidemic. The same remark applies to measles. Enteric fever is met with, but not frequently, and generally among Europeans only. An account of the epidemics of small-pox and plague is given below.

Cholera. After fever the greatest mortality is caused by cholera, which breaks out every year and occasionally spreads over the district with great virulence. During the first few years of the period for which reliable returns are available, there were widespread epidemics each alternate year, the death-rate in 1892, 1894 and 1896 being 4·6, 4·7 and 6·2 per mille, respectively, while it was very low in the alternate years. The district was then practically free from this scourge for three years, but since 1900 it has been an annual visitation, causing an average yearly mortality of over 9,000 in the five years ending in 1904, after which it fell to 3,000. It was most severe in 1900, when the returns showed 17,500 deaths, or 6·25 per mille, as due to its ravages.

Plague. For the last few years bubonic plague has regularly visited the district, the average annual mortality ranging from 1,000 to 4,000. Throughout these years, the disease has pursued a regular course, decreasing or disappearing entirely in the hot and rainy weather months, re-appearing after the rains, and reaching its climax in the cold weather.

Regarding these epidemics the Civil Surgeon writes as follows:—Plague has become established in the Darbhangā district since 1898. Apparently the first cases occurred in a village named Jalwāra in the Samāstipur subdivision in March of that year. During recent years it has shown itself in December or January, and has steadily increased during the months of

February, March, April and May. In June its virulence declines, and, as a rule, cases are not met with from July to November. The Samastipur subdivision in the south of the district has been most severely affected, and the town of Darbhangā has also suffered greatly. An interesting fact, for which no satisfactory explanation has yet been adduced, is that the north and east of the district, comprising chiefly the Madhubanī subdivision, has up to now been practically immune from the disease. Imported cases have naturally occurred, but plague has never obtained a hold in these parts. Railways have spread, and communications have improved. The lack of these facilities for the importation of the disease cannot therefore be given as an explanation of the happy immunity these tracts have hitherto enjoyed. The reason most probably lies in the nature of the soil, the comparatively smaller density of the population of the villages, or the manner of construction of the houses.

The type is generally bubonic. The glands most commonly affected appear to be, in order of frequency, (1) the femoral and inguinal glands, (2) the axillary glands, and (3) the cervical glands. Pneumonic plague is very uncommon. The disease, as in other localities, is characterized by a low type of virulence at the commencement, by a very high type of virulence during the height of the epidemic, and again by a diminution of virulence as the epidemic ceases during the hot months and beginning of the rains.

Small-pox also visits the district every year, but its ravages are not very severe, the death-rate due to it never having exceeded 0·30 per mille. It occasionally becomes epidemic among the unvaccinated, and is most frequent along the frontier where it is often imported from Nepāl. Small-pox.

The other diseases most frequently found are dysentery and diarrhœa, goitre, rheumatic affections, and skin, ear and eye diseases. Goitre is unusually prevalent; it is commonly attributed to the use of the water of the Little Gandak and Bāghmati, which come down from the Himālayas heavily laden with silt. The proportion of deaf-mutes is also greatest along the banks of these rivers, the affliction being most common in thāna Warisnagar which lies between them, and then in Samastipur and Dalsingh Sarai, which lie between the Little Gandak and the Ganges. Altogether 117 males and 62 females out of every 100,000 of either sex were returned as deaf-mutes at the census of 1901; and these three thānas alone are responsible for two-fifths of the number, though they contain barely a quarter of the total population. Blindness is fairly common, and at the census Other diseases and infirmities.

of 1901 it was found that the proportion of blind persons among males was 101 and among females 81 out of every 100,000. The glare and dust accompanying a hot dry climate appear to predispose to cataract, and in the years 1896—1900 no less than 380 successful cataract operations were performed on males and 209 on females. Insanity is rarer than in other parts of the Patna Division, only 9 males and 5 females out of every 100,000 being returned as insane in 1901.

SANITATION.

Outside the municipalities, proper methods of sanitation are almost unknown, in spite of the measures taken by the District Board to clear rank undergrowth, fill up unhealthy hollows and sweep selected villages. The tendency of the people is towards aggregation, and instead of living in hamlets, each nestling within its own belt of trees, as in Bengal, they cluster in closely-packed villages, usually consisting of a main street with narrow and ill-ventilated side lanes. Sanitary conditions are extremely primitive, while the apathy of the people and the unwholesome habits to which they are rooted render the task of village sanitation on any appreciable scale most difficult. Village sites are generally clusters of thatch-roofed mud-walled houses with extremely insanitary surroundings. The drainage is left to its own care, and ventilation is unthought of. If windows exist, they are made, at any rate in the zanāna apartments, not more than a couple of feet from the top of the wall, and then securely latticed, their use for ventilation being thereby minimized as far as possible.

Here and there, a man who has got on in the world may move out of the village *basti*, and build himself a brick-house elsewhere, but the average peasant, however prosperous he may be or however much his family may increase, will cling to the house of his father and his father's gods. To spend his savings on the improvement of his dwelling is the last thing that would occur to him: he regards his house only as a place to cook and sleep in, and for half the year he and his sons sleep in the open. The houses themselves are usually constructed of earth, dug out of a hole in the immediate vicinity, which in the rains becomes a regular cesspool, covered with rank vegetation and giving out a most offensive smell. Even the wells from which the people obtain their drinking-water are shamefully neglected, and are often allowed to get into a disgustingly filthy condition. In many instances, they are surrounded by house-drains, a large portion of the contents of which must find its way into the wells by percolation, carrying with them the germs of cholera. In the municipalities there is an organized system of conservancy; night-soil and other

refuse are removed; and steps are taken to protect the sources of water-supply. But none of them have a regular system for the supply of pure water or an adequate scheme of drainage, and, like the villages, they suffer from crowded and badly-aligned blocks of houses intersected by narrow lanes. Owing to the congestion of the population, the mortality from plague, dysentery and cholera are generally greater than in rural areas; in 1905 the death-rate in the municipalities was 47·03 per mille, and in the rest of the district 34·36 per mille, while the average for the preceding 5 years was 43·14 as compared with 32·05 in rural areas.

VACCINATION.

Formerly there was a strong prejudice against the practice of vaccination, and inoculation was prevalent; but the people have learnt to appreciate the protection afforded by the former, and this prejudice has passed away. Altogether 84,000 persons, or 30 per 1,000 of the population, were successfully vaccinated in 1904-05; and in each of the preceding five years protection was afforded to an average of 30·3 per mille. These figures are higher than in any other district of the Patna Division, except Muzaffarpur. This result is all the more satisfactory, because it is easy for any people in the north of the district who object to vaccination to avoid the vaccination agents by quietly going to a neighbouring village across the frontier. Statistics of vaccination from 1892-93 to 1901-02 will be found in the Statistical Appendix.

MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS.

The district contains six hospitals—the Dufferin and Rāj hospitals at Darbhangā, the Banwāri Lāl Hospital at Laheriā Sarai, male and female hospitals at Madhubanī, and a hospital at Samastipur; and thirteen public dispensaries at Baherā, Benipatī, Dalsingh Sarai, Khajaulī, Madhubanī, Madhepur, Malmal, Nandini, Narahiā, Narhan, Pūsa, Rusera, Sakrī and Tājpur. Great activity has been displayed in recent years in opening new dispensaries, and the annual number of patients treated rose from 117,553 in 1894 to 130,438 in 1899 and to 301,536 in 1904; in other words, the attendance at dispensaries increased by 131 per cent. in the decade. The average daily attendance in the same three years was 754, 822 and 1,577, respectively. The annual expenditure on the dispensaries is about half a lakh of rupees, half of which is derived from private subscriptions and endowments, nearly the whole of the remainder being contributed by the District Board and the various municipalities. Statistics of the daily attendance, indoor and outdoor, during the years 1892—1901 will be found in the Statistical Appendix; and the following tables give a statement of the

receipts and expenditure and of the principal diseases treated in 1905:—

Name of Dispensary.	Receipts.				Expenditure.	
	Government contribution.	District fund.	Municipal fund.	Subscriptions and other sources.	Establishment.	Medicines, diet, buildings, &c.
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Baheri Dispensary ...	15	753	...	...	574	194
Benipati ditto ...	15	644	...	...	564	95
Dalsingh Sarai ditto ...	15	...	...	1,584	755	794
Darbhanga Dufferin Hospital	15	...	...	7,302	3,118	4,202
Darbhanga Raj Hospital ...	30	...	...	16,476	5,116	11,389
Khajauli Dispensary	5	1,972	...	...	60	1,917
Laheria Sarai B. L. Hospital	801	2,492	2,635	370	3,827	4,047
Madhepur Dispensary	15	742	...	...	573	184
Madhubani Female Hospital	15	778	...	...	693	100
Madhubani Male Hospital ...	98	600	2,250	808	2,655	1,192
Malmal Dispensary	15	647	...	2	567	97
Nandini ditto	15	...	...	3,000	828	2,187
Narshia ditto	16	...	...	2,004	785	1,235
Narhan ditto	15	...	...	1,907	802	1,103
Pusa ditto	421	...	...	...	378	43
Rusera ditto	340	225	219	680	1,170	446
Sakri ditto	15	689	...	...	545	159
Samastipur Hospital	104	...	700	805	729	1,280
Tajpur Dispensary	15	277	...	422	574	140
Total ...	1,979	9,718	5,804	35,490	24,363	30,884

Name of Dispensary.	Diseases treated.					Number of operations.
	Worms, dysentery and other bowel diseases.	Fever.	Diseases of eye and special senses.	Injuries.	Other diseases.	
Baheri Dispensary ...	4,465	1,824	680	34	7,003	181
Benipati ditto	4,980	1,570	545	103	3,842	380
Dalsingh Sarai ditto ...	1,530	1,637	821	64	10,960	413
Darbhanga Dufferin Hospital	11,155	5,240	807	34	2,470	234
Darbhanga Raj Hospital ...	38,276	20,380	3,572	487	28,431	1,355
Khajauli Dispensary ...	121	132	37	21	311	40
Laheria Sarai B. L. Hospital	33,040	8,819	2,561	747	17,821	946
Madhepur Dispensary	1,468	1,112	522	46	4,161	109
Madhubani Female Hospital	4,448	1,710	824	17	4,704	200
Madhubani Male Hospital ...	6,433	1,538	1,510	271	6,383	389
Malmal Dispensary ...	2,728	795	1,022	35	4,811	313
Nandini ditto ...	760	1,340	304	144	4,353	261
Narshia ditto ...	1,149	380	1,271	74	4,676	672
Narhan ditto ...	2,550	3,658	782	122	7,833	312
Pusa ditto ...	213	172	78	57	797	41
Rusera ditto ...	1,286	1,502	971	131	6,165	502
Sakri ditto ...	4,792	1,179	826	123	4,722	397
Samastipur Hospital ...	1,822	689	634	212	8,318	382
Tajpur Dispensary	2,705	3,028	1,306	66	7,105	433
Total ...	124,727	56,315	19,125	2,788	133,968	7,714

CHAPTER V.

AGRICULTURE.

General conditions. Rainfall.

Although there is a certain amount of irrigation in the north of the district, the main sources of supply are tanks and streams, which are apt to fail in a dry season when they are most wanted. Artificial irrigation therefore plays a comparatively minor part in the agricultural economy of the district; and Darbhangá, like the rest of North Bihár, is dependent for its crops on the local rainfall. If the monsoon is up to its normal strength, and the rain is timely and well distributed, it admirably serves the purposes of the agricultural system generally practised. The main crop in the district is winter rice, which covers over three-fifths of the cropped area. This crop requires good rain at the end of May and in June, to facilitate the preparation of the ground and the growth of the seedlings. More rain is required in July and August for transplantation, and without a good fall during the *Hathiyá* asterism at the end of September and during the early part of October, the rice withers away and never comes to maturity. All the essentials for a good winter rice crop are thus secured in a year of normal rainfall, which also provides admirably for the crops of the *bhadoi* harvest, which are sown in May and June and reaped in August and September. A good rainfall at the end of monsoon further secures moisture for the crops of the next spring harvest, which are sown in October and November, and in a normal year are refreshed during the cold weather by seasonable showers. Unfortunately, the district does not always enjoy a normal rainfall, and whether this falls short of the average, or is badly distributed, full crops cannot be looked for; and in a district so dependent as Darbhangá on its winter rice, the most serious results naturally ensue from a failure or premature cessation of the monsoon. Although, therefore, Darbhangá is practically independent of irrigation in a year of normal rainfall and can raise full crops without it, the importance of seasonable and well distributed rain, particularly during the monsoon, cannot be overestimated.

Another very important factor affecting the agricultural prosperity of the district is its liability to floods. Provided that they come fairly early in the season and are not of great height or long duration, floods are productive of as much good as harm, as the cultivators have time to re-transplant if the crops are destroyed, and the land is enriched by the silt they leave. Very great damage however is caused by inundation in exceptional years, such as 1906, when floods of an unprecedented height and of long duration swept over a very extensive area, with the result that the *bhadoi* and *aghani* crops were almost entirely destroyed in the head-quarters subdivision, while they were very seriously damaged in other parts of the district, and that acute distress ensued throughout the flooded country, and in some tracts culminated in famine.

Tracts of fertility.

The first of the three tracts mentioned in Chapter I, viz., the south-western portion of Darbhangā, comprising the Dalsingh Sarai and Samastipur thānas, is the richest and most fertile area in the district and grows all the most valuable autumn (*bhadoi*) and spring (*rabi*) crops. The second tract, viz., the *doāb* between the Bāghmati and Little Gandak, is liable to inundation from the former river, and the main crop produced is winter rice, though good *rabi* crops are also raised in many parts from the lands enriched by the fertilizing silt deposited by floods. The third tract, as already stated, comprises the head-quarters and Madhubanī subdivisions, the south-eastern portion of which is in the rainy season a vast chain of lakes linked by the numerous streams flowing south. In this part the only crop of any importance is rice, which when not submerged by early floods is very prolific. In the Madhubanī subdivision, where the land is generally higher, the staple crop is winter rice; but the three western thānas and the south of the Phulparās thāna, contain stretches of high land suitable for the more valuable *rabi* crops.

Soils.

The soils of the district may be divided into three kinds, *balsundri*, a sandy loam; *bāngar* or *chikna*, a clayey soil with an admixture of sand; and *matiyāri*, a clay soil with little or no sand. The three main classes correspond roughly with the three physical divisions of the district. *Balsundri* is the prevailing soil south of the Little Gandak in the thānas of Samastipur and Dalsingh Sarai. The *doāb* between the Bāghmati and the Gandak, corresponding roughly with the Wārisnagar thāna, is chiefly composed of *bāngar*, while the prevailing soil in the rest of the district is *matiyāri*. But the distribution is not a strict one, for *matiyāri* soils are found in *chaurs* in Samastipur, and *balsundri* in the high lands of Benipatī. *Matiyāri* soil, being extremely retentive of moisture, is best suited

for the growth of winter rice. *Bhadoi* crops, which cannot stand too much moisture, do best in *balsundrī* or sandy *bāngar*, and the more valuable *rabi* crops are almost exclusively grown on *balsundrī*. Rice also does well on low-lying *bāngar* lands, if the admixture of sand is not too strong to absorb the moisture. All over the district are found patches of *ūsar* land, which are unproductive owing to the salt efflorescence known as *reh*: it is generally believed that this can only be eradicated by inundation.

On the whole, however, the foregoing classification of soils is of little practical importance, and would not be readily understood except by the more intelligent cultivators. The only classification of land understood by the ordinary cultivator is that of *dhānhar* and *bhīth*, *dhānhar* meaning the low land on which rice (*dhān*) is grown, and *bhīth* the uplands growing cereals or crops of any kind other than paddy. This was the classification adopted in the records at the time of the settlement concluded in 1903.

There are no Government irrigation works, but an area of 171 square miles or 6½ per cent. of the cultivated area is irrigated from other sources. Most of this area lies in the north of the district, where irrigation is devoted to food crops, whereas in the south it is reserved for the special and highly cultivated non-food crops. Here extensive irrigation is not practicable, owing to the scanty sources of supply, nor it is greatly required for the crops mainly grown. There is a prejudice against well-irrigation, as it is believed that land once artificially irrigated must always be irrigated. This belief is probably to a certain extent well founded; for in the soils prevailing in this area, irrigation forms a crust below the surface, which impairs the fertility of the land, unless irrigation is continued every year. Hence irrigation is only practised on lands near wells, and these lands are reserved for the more valuable crops. Irrigation once begun must be continued, and though it may result in a good return through the production of more valuable crops than can be raised on unirrigated lands, it entails an amount of labour and expense from which the majority of cultivators are averse. Irrigation.

Artificial irrigation is most practised in the Madhubanī subdivision to the north of the district. Here the numerous streams and rivers which intersect the country are utilized for the supply of water to the winter rice crop, especially in the Khajaulī and Phulparās thānas; and in the Benipatī thāna nearly one-third of the net cropped area is irrigated from a complete system of *pains* or artificial channels led off from the Kamlā river. These

pains, for many of which the old beds of the Kamlā were utilized, were constructed during the famine of 1897 by the energy and foresight of Mr. King, the Sub-Manager of the Rohika Circle of the Darbhangā Rāj; and they were the means of saving 30,000 acres of winter rice during the partial failure of the monsoon in 1901. In the area covered by these channels the outturn of winter rice in that year was 80 per cent. as against 30 per cent. on the west, 21 per cent. on the east and 19 per cent. on the south. Besides these sources of supply, tanks are very largely used all over the subdivision for the irrigation of the fields in their neighbourhood, either to expedite the transplantation of the winter rice seedlings or to prevent them from withering during a break in the rains.

In the head-quarters subdivision, the main sources of irrigation are the same as in Madhubanī, but the area irrigated is very much less. Most of the Madhubanī streams join the larger rivers before they reach this subdivision; and the latter are too large to permit of their being used for irrigation by the simple and inexpensive means adopted by the Madhubanī cultivators. Tanks are also less numerous, and the ryots being less familiar with irrigation than their fellows in Madhubanī, make less use of such tanks as there are.

Little, therefore, can be done in the way of extending irrigation in this part of the district owing to the scanty sources of supply; and this is the more unfortunate, because it is this area which, as a rule, suffers most severely in case of failure of the winter rice crop. In the north of the district many opportunities exist for the extension of irrigation on a comparatively large scale, but here a great difficulty is presented by the danger that the supply of water would be cut off in Nepāl at the time when it is most necessary. The question is further complicated by the fact that, in years of normal rainfall, irrigation is little practised or required. The water, which, in a year of drought, is priceless, is in an ordinary year a superfluity; and in a dry year, when irrigation is most wanted, there is a scanty supply of water in the tanks and streams. All irrigation projects in Madhubanī, accordingly, suffer from the defect that they would be little used in ordinary years, while in dry years they would benefit a comparatively small area. Hence large irrigation works are probably financially impossible, and any extension of irrigation must be looked for, mainly in the direction of increasing the usefulness of the present sources of supply by some cheap and efficient system, such as that which has already proved so successful in Benipatī. Well irrigation is practically useless for winter rice, owing to the small

area commanded by each well, and no wells would stand in an area so liable to inundation. But tanks can already irrigate 45,000 acres in the subdivision, and rivers and channels nearly 50,000 acres. It would probably be possible to improve the manner in which these two sources of irrigation are used, at a cost which would be insignificant in comparison with the advantage to be gained, and this would go far to render a large part of the area secure against a failure of the monsoon.

PRINCIPAL CROPS.

In Darbhangā, as in the rest of Bihār, the crops fall under one or other of the three main harvests, the *aghani*, *bhadoi* and *rabi*. The *aghani* is the winter crop, which is cut in the month of Aghan, and is composed mainly of winter rice. The *bhadoi* is the early or autumn crop, reaped in the month of Bhādo (August-September), consisting of 60 days' (*Sāthi*) rice, *marua* (*Eleusine Coracana*), maize, indigo, millets and less important grains; while the *rabi* crop, which is so called because it is harvested in the spring (*rabi*), includes such cold weather crops as wheat, barley, oats, gram, pulses and poppy. Of the net cropped area 62 per cent. grows *aghani*, 47 per cent. grows *rabi*, and only in 27 per cent. are *bhadoi* crops raised. With regard to the proportion of the area under these different crops, it must be remembered that the chief *aghani* crops are sown before the *bhadoi* crops are harvested, and similarly the chief *rabi* crops are sown before the *aghani* is reaped. Hence the latter cannot usually be sown as a second crop to *bhadoi*; and where it is predominant, the *rabi*, grown on land which has previously yielded winter rice, consists mainly of the cheapest kind of grains, such as *khesāri* (*Lathyrus sativus*), a grain of inconsiderable value, or a thin catch-crop of gram or linseed.

The *aghani* predominates in the Madhubanī and head-quarters subdivision, occupying 72 per cent. of the net cropped area in the former and 66 per cent. in the latter subdivision; and consequently the area under *bhadoi* crops is comparatively small. This tract is, moreover, unsuitable for the latter crop on account of its liability to floods; and the proportion of the cropped area under *bhadoi* is only 22 per cent. in the former and 25 per cent. in the latter subdivision. It is highest (41 per cent.) in the Samastipur subdivision, and as it is only *bhadoi* lands that yield a *rabi* crop of any importance, the proportion under *rabi* (46 per cent.) is approximately the same. In each of the other two subdivisions the *rabi* accounts for 47 per cent. of the net cropped area, but, as already explained, the percentage of land under winter rice is too high to leave room for any but the inferior *rabi* crops.

FOOD CROPS.

Food crops occupy altogether 84·21 per cent. of the net cropped area. Rice alone is raised on 61·39 per cent., and covers

both a larger gross area and a larger proportion of the cropped area than in any other district of the Patna Division north of the Ganges. After rice, *marua* occupies the largest area (220,000 acres) and the two crops together are grown on nearly three-quarters to the net cropped area of the district. This predominance of rice and *marua* leaves little room for the more valuable *bhadoi* and *rabi* food crops, such as wheat, barley and maize; and the proportion of land under these crops is smaller than in any other North Gangetic district in the Patna Division.

Rice.

Rice, covering three-fifths of the net cropped area, is the all-important crop in Darbhangā, and no less than 93 per cent. of the crop consists of winter rice. This is most prevalent in the north of the district, where the liability of the country to inundations renders it unsuitable for the growth of *bhadoi* or autumn rice, except on the higher lands. The latter is most extensively grown in Khajauli thāna, where, as in the neighbouring thāna of Benipati, it is often destroyed by floods. The cultivators are, however, generally compensated for the loss of their *bhadoi* crops in this area by the excellent *aghani* crop which they obtain from the submerged lands. With so large an area under winter rice, less than one-tenth of which is irrigated, Darbhangā is a district peculiarly sensitive to variations in the monsoon rainfall; for seasonable and well-distributed rainfall throughout the whole course of the monsoon is essential to the prosperity of this crop. The *bhadoi* crops on the other hand, while requiring good rain in the early part of the monsoon, are reaped during September, and are consequently independent of the *Hathiya* rains at the end of that month, the absence of which is fatal to the *aghani* harvest. This explains why the head-quarters and Madhubani subdivisions are always liable to scarcity or famine in the event of a failure of the monsoon, while the greater part of Samastipur is immune, for though rice is the most extensively grown crop in the latter subdivision, it covers less than a third of the net cropped area, as compared with the district average of three-fifths.

Methods of rice cultivation.

Rice is cultivated either by being sown broadcast or by means of transplantation. The former method is followed in the case of *bhadoi* rice. It is sown broadcast in June or July and is not transplanted; it is regarded as a 60 days' crop and is reaped in August or September. Transplantation is the commonest method, which is followed in the case of nearly all the *aghani* or winter rice. The seeds are first sown broadcast after the commencement of the rains in June or July on lands selected for seed nurseries, which have previously been ploughed three

or four times. After 4 or 6 weeks, when the young plants are about a foot high, they are generally transplanted, each plant being pulled out from the land, which is soft with standing water, and planted again in rows in flooded fields in which the soil has been puddled. The rice is then left to mature, with the aid of water, till towards the end of September. The water is then drained off and the fields are allowed to dry for 15 days and at the end of that time they are again flooded. It is this practice, known as *nigār*, which makes the rainfall which is expected at this time, or failing that, irrigation essential to a successful harvest. These late rains (the *Hathiyā*) are the most important in the year, for not only are they required to bring the winter crop to maturity, but also to provide moisture for the sowing of the *rabi* crops. Should no rain fall at this period, or if water cannot be procured from artificial sources, the plants will wither and become only fit for fodder; but if seasonable showers fall, or if the crop receives artificial irrigation, the rice comes to maturity in November or December.

Miscellaneous food-grains.

After rice, the next largest area is that shewn as under miscellaneous food-grains. These include all cereals and pulses except *marua*, maize, barley, wheat and gram, for which separate figures are given. Of the miscellaneous food-grains, the most widely grown is *khesāri* (*Lathyrus sativus*), which is usually sown as a catch-crop in *aghani* lands, at or just before the time of the *aghani* harvest. It is a cheap grain, and as a rule is eaten only by the poorer classes, though it is sometimes used with barley to make *chapātis*. *Arhar* (*Cajanus indicus*) is another important crop shewn under this head. It is usually sown with maize in May or June, but is not reaped till the following March. One main objection to the crop from the cultivator's point of view is that it occupies the land for so long a period, while the grain is not so valuable as that of other crops. On the other hand, the stalks are used or sold for fuel, the leaves are available as fodder, and being a hardy crop requiring little rainfall to sustain it, it is grown largely in a year of drought. The other miscellaneous food-grains require no detailed description. The chief are peas, *masuri* (*Ervum Lens*), *kodo* (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*), *china* (*Panicum miliaceum*), *sāwān* (*Panicum frumentaceum*), *urid* (*Phaseolus Roxburghii*), *mūng* (*Phaseolus Mungo*), *janerā* (*Holcus sorghum*) and oats. All of these, except oats, are generally sown with other crops. Their value as food-grains is not high, and they form, as a rule, the poor man's food. *Kodo*, *china* and *sāwān* are boiled and eaten like rice. *Masuri*, *urid* and *mūng* are consumed as pulses. *Janerā* and oats are largely

fodder crops. The whole of these minor food-grains cover less than one-fifth of the net cropped area of the district.

Marua. The most important single crop in the district after rice is *marua* (*Eleusine Coracana*), which covers 13 per cent. of the district area, a proportion which is fairly equally maintained in each subdivision. In Samastipur this crop is rather less extensively grown than in the northern part of the district; and it is most prevalent in the Khajauli and Madhubani thanas. It is the staple crop of a considerable part of the district, and is cultivated with considerable care. It is a cheap grain, mainly eaten by the poorer classes. The grain is pounded into flour and consumed in the form of cakes, while the stalks are useful as fodder. *Marua* is the only crop which is transplanted like rice; it is reaped in September, and the land on which it is grown almost invariably produces a second crop at the *rabi* harvest.

Barley. The next most important crop in the district is barley, which covers about 9 per cent. of the cropped area. It is grown on fairly high lands, which have generally already produced a *bhadoi* crop. It is largely consumed in the form of cakes by the poorer middle classes, who cannot afford rice or maize.

Maize. After barley comes maize or Indian corn (*makai*), covering 5 per cent. of the district cropped area, but it owes its position to its predominance in the Samastipur subdivision, where it occupies 14 per cent. of the net cropped area and is the crop next in importance to rice. It is often sown with *rabi* crops, and even where this is not the case, a *rabi* crop is usually sown in the land after it has been cut. The crop is often very luxuriant, especially when grown on the high lands round the village homestead. It is used as food in various forms. By the well-to-do, the cobs are often eaten roast or fried, but usually they are threshed and ground into flour, and then eaten either as *sattu* or in the form of cakes.

Wheat. Wheat covers only 3 per cent. of the net cropped area, and is least important in Madhubani and most prevalent in Samastipur. It requires a rich and fairly dry soil, as it is very subject to blight. It is often grown as a second crop in the best *makai* lands, but in many cases wheat lands are left fallow during the rains. It is a valuable crop, and but for its want of hardiness would probably be more widely grown than it is. As a food, it is eaten by the well-to-do classes.

Gram. Gram (*Cicer arietinum*), the last of the important cereals, covers only a little over 2 per cent. of the cropped area. It is most widely grown in the Darbhanga thana, where, as elsewhere, it is often sown as a catch-crop in winter rice lands. It is usually eaten in the form of flour or *sattu*.

Non-food crops are grown on 15·79 per cent. of the net cropped area. They predominate in the Samastipur subdivision, where they occupy 22 per cent.; while in each of the other two subdivisions they occupy only 14 per cent of the total cropped area. In Samastipur, the major portion of the large non-food crop area is devoted to indigo and tobacco, two very valuable crops, which are unimportant elsewhere. On the other hand, the area under sugarcane is mainly found in the north of the district, particularly in the Madhubani subdivision, where it has recently been substituted largely for indigo. But, as a whole, the more valuable non-food crops are grown mainly in the Samastipur subdivision. Non-food crops.

Oil-seeds are the most extensively grown non-food crop in the district. They consist mainly of linseed, but comprise also 25,000 acres of mustard, and small areas of *til* or gingelly (*Sesamum indicum*) and castor-oil. They constitute, however, the least valuable non-food crop, being most extensively grown in the head-quarters and Madhubani subdivisions as a catch-crop, after the harvesting of the winter rice. They cover nearly half of the non-food crop area, but their value is often inconsiderable. Oil-seeds.

A large area (29,800 acres) is under tobacco, which is probably the most paying crop in the district. Five-sevenths of the total area is found in the Samastipur and Dalsingh Sarai thanas, and most of the rest is in Warisnagar and Benipati. The latter, though mainly a rice-growing tract like the rest of Madhubani, contains a considerable stretch of high land which is used for the more valuable *rabi* crops. The fame of the tobacco of *pargana* Saraisa, which covers a large part of the Samastipur and Hajipur subdivisions, has spread far beyond the limits of North Bihar, and every year purchasers come from distant districts and buy large quantities of it. Tobacco.

The cultivation of poppy has never been widely practised in south of Darbhanga, its place being taken by its rival, tobacco; and the greater part of the opium grown in the district comes from the Benipati thana. The area covered by it is not large (2,400 acres), but the price obtained for the crude opium renders it a very valuable crop. The production of opium is a Government monopoly, and no person is allowed to grow poppy except on account of Government. Annual engagements are entered into by the cultivators, who, in consideration of the payment of an advance, agree to cultivate a certain quantity of land with poppy and to deliver the whole of the opium produced to the Government at a rate fixed according to its consistence, but subject to deductions for inferiority of quality. The best soil for poppy is loam, so situated Opium.